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Economic Success, Social Realities in Shenzhen SEZ

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SHENZHEN SEZ: TWO VIEWS

Pioneer Shenzhen SEZ Boasts 'Remarkable' Gains

HK1110120190 Beijing QIUSHI [SEEKING TRUTH]
in Chinese No 18, 16 Sep 90 pp 18-23

[Article by Li Hao (2621 3493), secretary of Shenzhen Municipal CPC Committee: "Ten Years of Pioneering Work and Progress"]

[Text] Since 1980, Shenzhen Special Economic Zone [SEZ] has seen, and continues to see, a decade of hard and pioneering work. Over the past years, Shenzhen SEZ experienced great changes, and made remarkable achievements. First, it carried out large-scale capital construction facilities, and created a sound investment environment. By the end of 1989, it had completed capital construction projects involving an investment worth more than 180 billion yuan. It developed a total of over 60 square kilometers of urban areas, built eight industrial zones, a science and technology park, and coordinated basic facilities, including urban roads, harbors, and wharves, customs ports, telephone facilities, and facilities for water and power supply. At the same time, it strengthened construction of the legal system, readjusted the size of government organizations, and improved its efficiency. Second, it developed the situation of "attracting foreigners and establishing links to inland areas." By 1989, Shenzhen had signed 6,890 agreements with foreign businessmen from more than 30 countries and regions, with the actual amount of foreign investment totaling more than \$2,700 million, accounting for one-seventh of the total amount of foreign investment directly invested in China. At present, it has set up more than 3,000 "three-capital" enterprises, and has jointly formed more than 3,900 enterprises with counterparts from 29 provinces, cities, and regions, involving an actual investment of over 3,000 million yuan. Third, it has established its distinctive economic system, and its economic development has been quite rapid. Compared to the situation 10 years ago, its 1989 gross social output value increased by 51 times, amounting to 21,450 million yuan. Its GNP increased by 28 times, amounting to 9,300 million yuan. Its national income increased by 44 times, amounting to 7,400 million yuan. Its gross value of industrial output increased by 192 times, amounting to 11,650 million yuan. Its fiscal revenue increased by 109 times, amounting to 1,877 million yuan. Its gross export volume increased by more than 230 times, amounting to 2,710 million yuan. While we managed the core of carrying out economic construction and upholding the work of reform and opening up, we always maintained a high level of political awareness, and gave top priority to the party construction, and the work of socialist spiritual civilization. We upheld the work of education in the four cardinal principles throughout our work, so that we have developed in a socialist direction and maintained the

mentality of striving for improvement, while Shenzhen SEZ, as well as other socialist undertakings, were thriving.

Over the past 10 years, Shenzhen SEZ also functioned as a service center for the whole country. First, it gave play to its role of being the "window." By importing from overseas and assimilating advanced technology and management skills, it has gradually transferred its technology and skills to inland areas. This includes more than 100 items relating to manufacturing techniques and processing skills; 59 items relating to technology and products successfully developed by it, eight of which filled in the gaps in relevant fields of inland areas. It also provided services to inland areas for exhibitions and negotiations; imported for production enterprises as well as scientific and research departments of inland areas, or acted on their behalf in the import of technology, equipment, key parts, important raw materials, and parts and components worth more than \$1,000 million. It also provided a host of economic and technological information to various localities across China, thereby promoting economic development in such localities. Second, it has functioned as an experimental site for reforms. Its experience in various areas became examples for the inland areas in terms of reform and opening up. For example, its reform experience in the invitation for tenders of capital construction projects, establishment of a foreign exchange adjustment center, establishment of an investment management company, introduction of a compensatory system for the use of land, and a labor contracts system, have been gradually adapted and promoted in other localities. Third, it began functioning as a base to generate foreign exchange through exports. In addition to exporting its own products, Shenzhen also exports products made in inland areas. Fourth, it has contributed to China's economy. Over the decade, the amount of taxes and profit delivery, bank interest, and custom duties paid to the central authorities, and the amount of profits paid to shareholders from inland areas and labor charges paid to these areas respectively totaled 17,400 million and over 90 million yuan.

Compared to the Hong Kong region and other developed countries, the economic development, as well as construction achievements of Shenzhen SEZ in the past decade were by no means inferior. Besides, Shenzhen, while maintaining a rapid economic development, prevented the emergence of certain major shortcomings of capitalism. These facts have proved that China's decision to establish an SEZ is correct, and that the approach taken by Shenzhen SEZ was successful. Its emergence was by no means a result of the subjective thinking of any individual. Rather, it is an inescapable requirement of socioeconomic development in China during the new era. Once it emerged, it displayed its enormous vitality.

Establishing an SEZ was a new thing in China. We have been able to constantly get a deeper understanding about how to do a better job in running the socialist economic

zone. In our exploration in the past decade we have accumulated some preliminary experience in this respect.

To Uphold the Correct Policy of Opening Up, To Actively Import Foreign Capital, Technology, Management Skills, and To Actively Develop an Export Economy

In the early days following establishment of the SEZ, some people were worried that to open up to the outside world would lead to the growth of capitalism. Right from the start, Shenzhen upheld this principle: Our work of opening up is to uphold the practice of opening up in a socialist direction, and is by no means to practice capitalism. Acting according to the requirements set forth by the CPC Central Committee and the provincial CPC Committee, we implemented the principles of "importation with restrictions" and "repulsing evils but not foreign things." On the one hand, we acted boldly in importing foreign capital, advanced science and technology, management skills, and outstanding cultural achievements. On the other, we resolutely rejected the infiltration and dissemination of all corrupt capitalist matters. Over the past 10 years, Shenzhen has gradually widened the scope of opening up. Nevertheless, it still maintains and carries forward its socialist outlook. The action of importing foreign capital did not change its socialist nature. This is because activities using foreign capital were carried out under the guidance and supervision of China's laws, regulations, and social management departments representing the basic interests of the masses, and were carried out under an economic operating mechanism of the SEZ that integrated the planned economy with market readjustment. Such capital was a supplement to the socialist economy, and existed for the purpose of promoting socialist economic development.

Shenzhen is at the meeting point of the international and domestic markets. It must actively take part in the international division of labor and international competition, and it must actively develop its export economy, so as to make the process of opening up become a process of boosting its strength for the socialist modernizations. Over the decade, we took the development of an export economy as an important task and goal of the SEZ. We set up a system and adopted a series of policies and measures that helped develop the export economy. We gradually succeeded in taking the international market as our orientation, did a good job in changing the composition of industries and the orientation of management style and strategy, and gradually transformed the economic structure into one that generates foreign exchange through exports. Fully utilizing the superior geographic position of Hong Kong, where international contacts are easy to maintain, Shenzhen integrated industry with trade, set up export bases, diversified export channels, and set up overseas sales networks to march directly into the international market. It also mobilized the enthusiasm of enterprises to export to generate foreign exchange by adopting a "slanting policy" toward them,

and by supporting through credit and taxes those enterprises that generate larger amounts of foreign exchange. It adopted a flexible and diversified approach toward the processing trade. For example, when the end products of processing were to be sold in the inland areas, Shenzhen carried out precision work to turn them into export products with added value. When processing orders were placed with units in the inland areas by foreigners, Shenzhen became the export channel. Also, it set up overseas production enterprises to put products directly into the international market. It also cooperated with foreign businessmen in the development of new products. Moreover, it made use of its foreign partners' international purchase and sales network to purchase raw materials in order to make marketable goods for sale in the international market. Over the decade, we always upheld the principle of relying on the whole country; extensively carried out cooperation with the inland areas in terms of economic development, development of technology and equipment, cultivation of qualified personnel, and so forth; and worked hard to develop new products and to enter the international market, thereby forming an export network linking the inland areas-Shenzhen-overseas. By jointly establishing factories with enterprises from inland areas, it brought in many fine products from these areas or used their raw materials and semi-finished products, together with its imported advanced technology and equipment and its intensive processing and precision work, to manufacture high-class goods with added value. At the same time, it cooperated with various universities and colleges, as well as research institutes, to develop high-technology products for large-scale production in the SEZ and for export to the international market. In 1989, the gross export volume of Shenzhen ranked second among China's large and medium-sized cities. More than 60 percent of its industrial products were exported. Over 800 kinds of products were produced in and exported from Shenzhen. In 1989, more than 40 enterprises received annual foreign exchange revenues of over \$10 million; and more than 30 enterprises received annual foreign exchange revenues of more than \$1 million. This thus formed a preliminary pattern of an export economy. In order to attract more foreign capital, we particularly stressed following international practice and creating an environment for fair competition, so that Shenzhen became a "venue for playing according to the rules." For this reason, we strengthened the education and training of cadres and relevant personnel in this area, helping them understand and voluntarily observe international practice. Meanwhile, we made the work methods and procedures of relevant governmental authorities conform to international practice. This is one of the reasons that Shenzhen has been attractive to foreign businessmen.

To Boldly Reform the Economic Structure, To Explore the Specific Form for Integrating the Planned Economy With Market Readjustment

Over the decade, we devoted major efforts to handling the work of structural reform and took reform as the driving force for the construction of the SEZ. Amid our

reforms, we always heeded and grasped the basic principle that the SEZ's reform of its economic structure is a self-perfection of the socialist system and the socialist economic system, and that it is by no means a restoration of the capitalist system or its economic system. Under the guidance of this basic principle, we reformed and explored our work mainly in the following ways:

1. Reform of the ownership system. While various types of economic systems coexist, it is necessary that the system of public ownership be placed in a prominent position in the SEZ. However, we held that we could not simply interpret the system of public ownership as a unitary "system of state ownership." On the basis of this understanding, we encouraged, in reforming our economic structure, the establishment of economic combinations involving various regions, sectors, and trades, as well as joint ventures through which the partners joined harmoniously together. At the same time, we attached great importance to the development of stock enterprises, and encouraged departments, regions, enterprises, and individuals to join them, so as to help mobilize the enthusiasm of various areas through these amalgamations marked by the public ownership. In addition to Chinese-foreign joint ventures, and enterprises jointly formed with units from inland areas, Shenzhen now has 85 stock enterprises, including five listed companies, with face value of shares totaling 330 million yuan. We are summing up our experience, perfecting laws and regulations, and striving to standardize the stockholding system, particularly the listing system.

2. Reform of the enterprise management system. To give vitality to enterprises and to mobilize the enthusiasm of enterprises in production and operations are the basis for developing the productive forces of society. However, the basic conditions for realizing those two are determined by whether or not enterprises have the right of autonomy. Therefore, in our reforms, we first decentralized power to enterprises, reduced the number of "competent authorities" supervising them, and set up very few comprehensive departments providing services, giving guidance, and readjusting the operations of enterprises. The government generally did not interfere with the production and operations of enterprises, but let them make their own decisions. Through policies, decrees, and economic means, the SEZ government guided and standardized the direction of enterprise development and provided information to enterprises about the international and domestic markets as well as various services. Second, the SEZ allowed enterprises to carry out production and operations in a flexible manner, and, to a certain extent, allowed them to diversify their operations while concentrating on a particular trade. At the same time, it created conditions for enterprises to engage in fair competition, so as to spur enterprises to improve their operations and management and to improve their level of technology.

3. Reform of the distribution system. The enthusiasm and creativeness of laborers are the most powerful driving force for the development of productive force. The most

important point for mobilizing the initiative of laborers is to establish a rational system of distribution, in addition to strengthening their ideological and political work. According to the reality that various types of economic systems coexist in the SEZ, we have, over the decade, upheld the practice of distribution according to work, supplemented by other distribution methods, and have gradually switched from centralized distribution to decentralized distribution under the guidance of the state's Constitution, laws, orders, and policies. Under the condition that the state firmly held the right to readjust the level of individual income, we gave more decisionmaking power to enterprises about distribution, and broke away from the practice of equalitarianism. At present, enterprises either adopt the practice of linking their total wages to economic results, or adopt the practice of calculating their wages on the basis of workload, payment in kind, piece work, and so forth. Thus, to the extent of the total wages, they have more autonomy in the distribution of wages. Furthermore, some stock enterprises adopt the practice of distributing bonuses according to the proportion of shares held by the workers. We also protect the legitimate rights, as well as distribution interests and rights, of foreign parties to the "three-capital" enterprises, while exercising legal supervision over the process of their distribution. We also protect according to law, the legitimate rights of China's staff and workers.

4. Exploration of a specific form for integrating the planned economy with market readjustment. In our practice over the decade, we learned that to totally implement the market economy in the SEZ was not feasible, nor would it work if we adopted a unitary system of planned management. We must integrate the planned economy with market readjustment and simultaneously use both the "visible hand" and the "invisible hand." Since the SEZ opened more widely to the outside world, its share of international division of labor increased. As it took the development of an export economy as its development goal, it needed a more useful and a wider scope of market readjustment, as well as a more flexible approach. How should the planned economy be integrated with market readjustment? Our specific form was that we upheld the mandatory planned readjustment for economic activities that were of vital importance to the economy of the SEZ. For example, we made capital construction, financial credit, the scale of import and export, the composition of industries, population development, and so on, subject to mandatory planned readjustment. In the process of making planned readjustment, we gave full play to the functions of pricing, taxation, credit, interest rates, and other economic means. For example, we used credit and interest rates to readjust the amount of capital available to enterprises, so as to give guidance to their construction projects and their development of products. We used pricing to readjust the consumption of electricity and water by enterprises. We used the difference of market prices to readjust the proportion of China-made raw materials used by enterprises. We used tax rates to attract foreign

enterprises. We used foreign exchange, tax rates, and interest rates to encourage enterprises to import and develop high-technology products and to give guidance to the development of trades. While making planned readjustment of the macroeconomic targets, we considered the realities of the SEZ and gave full play to the functions of market readjustment. Over the decade, we acted in accordance with the needs of the SEZ to develop an export economy, and successively formed our labor market, real estate market, production means markets, and securities markets. The prices of most commodities underwent market readjustment. We also acted according to the characteristics of the SEZ that most of its large enterprises were export enterprises. We respected the law of value adopted by the international market so that the price of products conformed to that of the market, and this helped enterprises readjust their direction of production, as well as their scale of production, according to changes in the international market.

To Take the Road of Economic Development by Means of Self-Accumulation, Constant Development, and Economic Results

China's SEZ's were founded under circumstances in which there was insufficient capital and qualified personnel, and China was inexperienced in this respect. In particular, it was very difficult to locate sources of capital for their construction. Except for adopting preferential policies toward the SEZ's, the state made little direct investment in the zones, which had to depend on themselves to raise funds for many of their construction projects. Therefore, while we made the full use of our external conditions and foreign capital, we had to uphold the practice of self-reliance and took the establishment of an internal mechanism for self-accumulation and self-development, as well as the process of tapping our potential, as the principle of constructing the SEZ, so as to make the economic strength of the SEZ grow constantly.

First, we relied on the implementation of preferential policies to extensively raise funds for the construction of basic facilities, thereby paving a smooth road for the SEZ's economic development. The construction of the SEZ was started after beginning the construction of basic facilities. At that time, many projects had to be started simultaneously, and wide stretches of land needed to be developed. This required a large amount of construction capital, and neither local financial offices nor the state was able to provide enough to meet demand. Under these circumstances, Shenzhen SEZ solved the problem by stressing preferential policies, actively importing foreign capital, and making joint efforts with local joint ventures to absorb idle capital in society. Over the decade, it invested a total of 18,120 million yuan in capital construction, including 327 million yuan in direct investment from the state, accounting for 1.8 percent; 3,797 million yuan (after conversion into renminbi) in foreign capital, accounting for 20.95 percent; 2,429 million yuan from the municipality's fiscal authorities, accounting for 13.4 percent; 4,874 million yuan

raised by the municipality's enterprises, accounting for 26.9 percent; 3,500 million yuan in domestic loans, accounting for 19.31 percent; 1,296 million yuan from various ministries and provinces, accounting for 7.5 percent; 677 million yuan from local joint ventures, accounting for 3.73 percent; and 123 million yuan from other sources, accounting for 6.78 percent. Consequently, we accomplished many basic construction projects and made the investment environment of the SEZ more perfect, thereby building the material basis for its economic development.

Second, we broke away from old conventions and acted boldly in using bank loans. By making use of other people's money and the snowball effect, and by turning idle money into capital, we improved the economic revitalization of the SEZ. In the process of using bank loans to carry out the construction, particularly development construction, we stressed investing such loans in the most needed construction works and strived to make the best use of the capital. In order to improve the land-use value, we set up a corresponding management system for land use, granted corresponding decision-making power to land development enterprises, and formed a mechanism to facilitate the circulation of capital. When we developed a land site, we accepted advanced purchase of plants and flats under construction, so that the value of capital increased constantly, and the percentage of land use continued to rise. For instance, in developing a small area in the Shangbu industrial zone with a 18 million yuan loan, we used the deposit money received in the sale of first-phase plants, which was under construction, as the capital for construction of the second phase. As a result of the continuous "snowball effect," we completed the 75 million yuan project and achieved better economic results.

Third, while we strived to maintain a relatively high rate of economic development, we always stressed the importance of improving economic results. Over the decade, there were times that the front as well as the scale of capital construction was excessively large. But we promptly made adjustments and slowed the excessively rapid growth and cut the scale of excessively large construction projects. When there was widespread expanded reproduction, we paid attention to tapping the potential of existing enterprises and stressed the contents of expanded reproduction. We also handled well the relations between accumulation and consumption, checked the rapid growth in consumption funds, opposed extravagance and waste, worked hard to increase accumulation, and intensified our economic strength.

To Strengthen Party Leadership and To Promote Simultaneous Development in Material and Spiritual Civilization

As the task of constructing the SEZ was very arduous, we had to devote much effort to undertaking economic construction and developing the production forces of the SEZ. Some people therefore mistakenly held that they

might take a relaxed attitude toward the work of party construction. Under the influence of bourgeois liberalization there were also some people who advocated the attitude of overlooking party leadership and suggested that "the party's work should be handled by amateurs, and the party's cadres should be part-timers." In some units, party work was not included on the daily agenda and was not given its proper position. In view of this situation, we promptly conducted education in the party on special topics and theoretically distinguished right from wrong, sought a common understanding, and clearly stated that the SEZ implemented only special economic policies, not political ones. In particular, we must not take a relaxed attitude toward construction of the party. Instead, we should further strengthen it. At the same time, we conducted extensive propaganda and education through all channels and in various forms, and actively created an environment in which public opinion favored the strengthening of party construction. We always upheld the party's leadership in the political affairs of the SEZ. We resolutely implemented the party's basic line and its principles and policies relating to the founding of SEZ's, and ensured that the SEZ developed in the correct direction. In the course of implementation, to strengthen the party's leadership in political affairs, we realized that, first, we must strengthen the party's leadership in organizing ideological and political work, must uphold the four cardinal principles, and the work of reforming and opening up down to the grassroots. Recently, our municipal CPC Committee has often organized units at the grassroots level to study and work out ideological and political work, in addition to acting according to changes in the international and China's situation, and the actual situation of the SEZ. Whenever it was necessary, we also promptly convened special municipal meetings to study problems relating to ideological and political work. Second, we upheld the party's leadership in implementing the policies on various construction works, and earnestly implemented the party's principles and policies. In the course of building the SEZ, we always took the work of organizing, publicizing, inspecting, supervising, and implementing the party's principles and policies as the prime task of party organizations at all levels. While undertaking construction work, we resolutely acted according to the party's policies, from the formulation of development strategy and plans to every aspect of their organization and implementation. In order to make democratic and scientific decisions, we demanded that we follow the "four don'ts" when making decisions. That is, one should not make a decision on matters without conducting any serious investigation or study, without having a full-scale consultation or discussion, without preparing fewer than two feasibility study reports for comparison, and without it having been studied by the leaders. Thus, we have safeguarded that the party's line, principles, and policies are really implemented.

Over the decade, we always upheld the principle of strictly enforcing party discipline, strengthened the

party's self-construction, and gave full play to the role of party organizations as the fighting force and the exemplary role of the party members. The realization of functions of party leadership is done through party organizations and party members. Recently, we seriously grasped the construction of the party organizations and party system. We set up party work committees among the municipality's large systems, as well as various party organizations in enterprises, established and perfected the rules and regulations, and worked out explicit regulations on and specific requirements for party construction in the "three-capital" enterprises, in which it was previously rather difficult to carry out party activities. At the same time, we did a good job in selecting and assigning leaders of the party organizations, so as to ensure that the party's work was carried out through the organization and the system. We strengthened the construction of the party's ideology and party style and conducted regular, or sometimes special, ideological education among the party members. Starting last year, we also upheld the activity of assessing party members in a democratic manner, in which we stressed education in honesty and in the communist belief, opposed corruption, and properly but strictly dealt with party members who violated discipline, so that the ranks of the party could stand against tests in the areas of performance, as well as reforms and opening up. Right from the start of the construction of the SEZ, we upheld the principle of "grasping the work in two respects." As we did a good job in building material civilization, we devoted major efforts to building socialist spiritual civilization. With respect to the latter, we specifically did the following work: First, we conducted education in the basic situation of the country and in ardently loving the socialist motherland. In particular, we explained to primary and secondary school students, as well as youths, about the history of our nation, which was full of untold tribulations, and let them understand that only socialism could save China, that the younger generation must bring credit to the Chinese nation and to the motherland, and that they must further develop the socialist economy with their own efforts. Second, we acted according to the actual situation of the SEZ and conducted education against corruption and in struggling despite hardship. In the wake of widening the scope of opening up, it was inevitable that certain bourgeois outlooks on life, values, and ethics, such as attitudes that simply emphasized the importance of money, pleasure, and personal interests, took this opportunity and infiltrated and corrupted people's thinking. Some years ago, there were people who encouraged people living in the SEZ to develop the thinking of "gold mining." This fact indicated that under no circumstances must we take a relaxed attitude, not even a little bit, in the ideological struggle. Therefore, we always insisted on taking education against corruption as a focal point of the construction of socialist spiritual civilization, and put forward the spirit of "acting in a bold, innovative, united, and devoted manner." We continuously carried out the work of eliminating the "seven evils," thereby effectively strengthening the capability of the cadres and the masses to resist such corrupt

bourgeois thinking, and promoting the construction of the socialist spiritual civilization.

A good foundation was laid in the first decade following the founding of Shenzhen SEZ. In the coming decade, we must make further efforts and strive for better development. The preliminary plan for the 1990's is to maintain the growth rate of the GNP at 15 percent, and the growth rate of gross industrial output at about 20 percent, so as to coordinate and stabilize the SEZ's economic development; and to strive to build the SEZ into one in which industry will be the major element, tertiary industry will be rapidly developed, the economy will be brisk; the politics will be of the progressive type, and its science and technology will be at an advanced level. Specifically, we must achieve four major goals: First, by the turn of this century we must strive to make the GNP catch up with, or at least be close to, the level of those not so highly developed countries. Second, we must strive to become the most important export base and source of foreign exchange. Third, we must strive to become a successful experimental zone in the structural reform of politics and economics. Fourth, we must strive to become an advanced zone in the construction of spiritual civilization. In order to achieve the above goals, we must carry out reforms and opening up in a more resolute and down-to-earth manner, and strive to establish a system that can fully mobilize the initiative of enterprises and laborers, and that can demonstrate the superiority of socialism. At the same time, we should further expand economic and technological exchanges and cooperation with foreigners, so as to further develop Shenzhen's export economy; do a better job in construction, for a sound investment environment to attract more foreign capital; strive to improve management skills; and readjust the composition of the economy. While we maintain the "Shenzhen speed," we should strive to achieve economic results for Shenzhen; and continue to strengthen party construction, as well as the construction of spiritual civilization, so as to ensure that the SEZ continues to make progress in the socialist direction.

SEZ Temporary Workers Experience Hardships

91CM0014A Beijing ZHONGGUO ZUOJIA [CHINA'S AUTHORS] in Chinese No 3, Jun 89 pp 176-207

[Article by Ma Yijun (7456 1763 6511): "Decade of Suffering—A Chronicle of 300,000 Temporary Workers at Shenzhen"]

[Text] *This was a decade of departure from one state for another, and thus it was a decade filled with contradictions and suffering; this was a decade in which people were doomed to pay a price for China's history and endure suffering.*

A poet predicted the following: This plant will grow big, but now it is a plumule.

Growth—But escape from set forms is preordained...

Introduction

The Great Tide Brings a Surge of 30,000

This place was once an obscure little town by the sea. It had a small street less than one Chinese li long with two small sundries stores and a small food shop where passersby could satisfy their hunger. A blacksmith shop made of galvanized iron sheets and bits of wood was this small town's only "industry."

This was the Shenzhen of a former time.

Time flew and Shenzhen slowly accumulated momentum for a sudden change.

It was probably during the early years of the 1980's that Shenzhen, which faces Daya Wan [Bias Bay] on the east, touches the mouth of the Zhu Jiang on the west, and is contiguous with Hong Kong's New Territories on the south, completed this accumulation and suddenly burst forth like a dazzling nova. On the more than 2,000-square-kilometer piece of land developed along the main artery running from Shenzhen to Huiyang, myriad large and small enterprises for the processing of imported raw materials sprang up in the form of foreign trader sole proprietorships, Sino-foreign joint ventures, and Chinese joint investments with concerned departments.

In just eight year's time, the gross output value of Shenzhen industry climbed more than 100-fold. The "Shenzhen speed" made Chinese and foreign economists concerned with the golden strip at the mouth of the Zhu Jiang exclaim: The world's largest export-processing area has appeared at Shenzhen in China.

The news of this sudden transformation rapidly generated a powerful shock wave in both the fertile and infertile regions of China's more than 20 provinces, directly administered cities, and autonomous regions. It beckoned immigrants as did Europe and the United States following World War II. The peasants who had only just begun to have sufficient food to eat and clothing to wear and who longed for greater riches, the peasants who remained hungry and tortured by poverty and who were anxious to rid themselves of impoverishment, and the peasants who had cared for a plot of ancient soil for generations on end and who had never thought about moving one step away from it turned their backs firmly and resolutely on their native villages and surged to the south land, headed for Shenzhen carrying with them the "dream of panning for gold" that they had dreamed so many times and that had endlessly excited them...

Everything in this world works out for the best. Life's tragedies and comedies also meld and intertwine. World War II plunged virtually the entire world into a blood bath, yet there is no denying that it was this tragic war that delayed the economic crisis of the 1930's and 1940's that would have brought about the collapse of the Western world. While destroying mankind's wealth, the

war also created mankind's demand. The war strangled the old productivity, but also created a new productivity.

At Istanbul, which guards the entrance to the Black Sea, and which is a European transportation hub, every Friday afternoon after the war more than 1,000 strong Turks boarded trains to travel northward to war-ravaged places in urgent need of rebuilding that were all "places filled with hope"...

History seems to repeat itself in the same ways.

In China, where the extent of destruction was no less than the turmoil following a war, neither Chinese society nor the Chinese people seemed able to bear any longer the self-acknowledged great poverty and backwardness.

The desire for plenty and modernization fissioned first at the basic level of Chinese society. Tens of thousands of young peasants in Guangdong, Xinjiang, Hunan, Jilin, Anhui, and Shaanxi harkened to the distant call and headed south.

The "happy Friday" idea of Istanbul at that time was not repeated here where temporary workers looking for work daily crowded the Shenzhen border entry inspection building on which work had not yet been completed. All of a sudden, deserted Shenzhen became noisy and crowded.

Shenzhen was swollen beyond all dreams and expectations.

During June 1988, I visited Shenzhen, where high-rise buildings stood row upon row in a city of already substantial scale. A deputy chairman of a labor service company told me that, according to estimates, there were already 300,000 temporary workers at that time in Shenzhen City (including surrounding counties such as Baoan). These 300,000 exceeded by four times the permanent working population of Shenzhen, and were 50,000 more than the permanent population of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. These figures amounted to the total population of some countries in Africa such as Djibouti.

One can say without exaggeration that this was the most immense temporary work force ever assembled in one place in the world.

People were astonished and alarmed in the face of these 300,000 temporary workers who surged in like a great tide. This was not just because of the huge size and complexity of this "special social group" of humanity. The Shenzhen temporary worker phenomenon was also a recondite social problem. Where the 300,000 Shenzhen temporary workers lived, explanations could be found for all the various arresting theories about society, about people, about history, about reality, about sexual love, about human rights, about cultural psychology, and about the philosophical background that sociology encompasses.

Zhang Hanming [1728 3352 2494], chairman of the Shenzhen City General Federation of Trade Unions, told me, "Without these temporary workers, there would not be today's Shenzhen. When Shenzhen was still a wasteland, it was the temporary workers who built it with their own hands. In Shenzhen today, it is still the temporary workers who do the work on assembly lines in more than 80 percent of enterprises. They are the real builders and the real contributors in this city of Shenzhen. Shenzhen should erect a monument to them."

But they are suffering.

Their suffering comes not just from the excess hardships in their work, nor does it come from their having no locally registered domicile, which means they cannot love and cannot settle into a warm family life, but are destined to drift here. A greater suffering in living on this special soil of Shenzhen comes from their personal conflicts and clashes with reality.

In the process of exploring avenues for development, as an "experimental zone" for reform in China, Shenzhen is replete with conflicts and sufferings. It is in a niche between the new and the old, where it is faced with the dilemma of balancing and choosing between the decline and rise of two institutions, the merits and demerits of two systems, and the praise and condemnation of two concepts. It is in a dilemma. The temporary worker phenomenon in Shenzhen is also an outgrowth of choosing one or the other from this dilemma.

These temporary workers come primarily from out-of-the-way, impoverished, and backward rural villages. It is poverty that is forcing them to leave the land of their ancestors. But, in departing from a poverty-stricken land, they do not break free from the ignorance, the dependence, and the inertia that accompanies poverty. In this niche between the new and the old called Shenzhen, they likewise face two choices. On the one side is the pull of a feudal mentality, the comfort of traditional ideas, and the hankering after a habitual way of life. On the other side is the clash with modern ideas, the regression of human value, and the heavy burdens of industrial production.

More than 200,000 of Shenzhen's 300,000-strong temporary work force are female temporary workers, and this mysterious "female community" causes an even more enigmatic feeling.

On the day that we paid a visit to Baoan County, which is under the jurisdiction of Shenzhen, we met with a group of female temporary workers who happened to be eating at a foreign trader sole proprietorship plastic-glove processing enterprise. They lived in a 56-square-meter building, 18 women living cheek by jowl, their beds stacked tier upon tier. Possibly because of the overcrowding, the room seemed dark and messy. Those faces, which seemed thin and pallid from insufficient sleep or poor nourishment, made it very difficult to guess that their actual age was under 20.

"What do you want to write about us?" a maiden from an Anhui rural village who had been silent for a long time asked me suddenly.

"You know we are the most lonely, most suffering bunch of people. People do not really understand our..."

Though she spoke only briefly, the chatter that filled the room stopped.

I became mute for a time as well.

The room, which was not very well ventilated to begin with, became even more stifling, imparting an oppressive feeling.

The economic boom in Europe following World War II sparked the economic development of the Asian-Pacific region. One after another, Kaohsiung in Taiwan, Masan in South Korea, and Bataan in the Philippines all built export-processing zones relying on foreign raw materials and markets. As in Shenzhen today, females were highly concentrated in these processing zones. Consequently, all the special phenomena that go with the concentration of females, sexual frustration, getting involved, masturbation, prostitution, lesbianism, and sexual sublimation appeared in a continuous stream.

The temporary female workers at Shenzhen also faced similar problems. Moreover, our control system, control methods, and our ideological and ethical concepts made recognition and solution of these problems more conflicting and complex. Reform of the worker employment system, which was one of a series of reforms in Shenzhen, made the Shenzhen temporary workers a subject of general concern. It produced attention-attracting experiences. However, we need not sidestep its dark and backward side. We should face it squarely and use it to issue a warning to the people of the country. This is because the "temporary worker phenomena" that exist in Shenzhen today can occur very quickly in coastal and inland areas of China, where the labor market is gradually being opened up. In their role as a tremendous "vehicle," the 300,000 temporary workers in Shenzhen bear the hardships that go with our by no means young republic's feeling its way along haltingly. Reform and opening to the outside world is an agonizing process that requires a period of adjustment and a period of transformation. Therefore, history ordains that this generation go through tribulations, taste hardships, and become "sacrifices."

People term the temporary workers of Shenzhen its third-class citizens. Just how are they living and struggling? In the processing of becoming "people" written in capital letters, will they be able to shake off their tragic fate to become masters of society?

Chapter I

Difficult Choices

As he stood on the Lowu Bridge that connects Shenzhen and Hong Kong, an American correspondent visiting the mainland for the first time sighed:

"One of my feet is standing in the 'capitalism' of Hong Kong, and the other is standing in the 'socialism' of Shenzhen. Time and space thus link together in this unimaginable way two systems that could not be reconciled in the past."

Many matters are unimaginable. At the end of the 1940's, our republic cleared away the smoke of war to enter a period of peaceful construction. At that time, the economy of the sliver of land that is Hong Kong was still very backward. Its development began at virtually the same time as New China's.

More than 40 years flickered by, and when China's closed doors were gradually opened a crack, the Chinese people were astounded. During the decades when the mainland was conducting one political "revolution" after another, Hong Kong's economy had developed rapidly, leaving the mainland behind.

Shamed, the country became resolute. Would it be difficult to "make Shenzhen into another Hong Kong"? We're both Chinese. The blood of the same race courses through our veins.

Shenzhen courageously imported Hong Kong's capital, technology, equipment, and management; hotels, office buildings, and supermarkets that rivaled the skyscrapers of Hong Kong towered to the sky, and huge neon lights, luxury dance halls, gaily colored overpasses embellished the fancies of the people of Shenzhen in a riotous dreamlike blur.

Opening to the outside world and reform assaulted the stronghold of the purest of the pure form of public ownership. The illusory dream of the overall interests of the whole people created by the "large in size and collective in nature" ownership system was smashed as foreign businessmen and foreign capital flooded in in large quantities, and a multiplicity of means of production ownership forms developed, changing the formerly easily reconciled contradictions among the singular interests of the people and transforming them into not easily reconciled complex contradictions involving varied interests. The bourgeois bosses that we formerly itched to knock to the ground and grind under foot now grandly controlled enterprises and controlled workers in this socialist realm of Shenzhen. The descendants of the earliest rulers of China, who possessed a sense of being masters in their own house and a sense that "the working class must lead everything," stooped to the role of being a work force for others, their pride mercilessly assailed.

A myriad of "three kinds of partially or wholly foreign-owned enterprises" arose in Shenzhen amidst a welter of contradictions and conflicts. What was the position of the "masters in their own house?" How should the phenomenon of exploitation and being exploited in the "three kinds of partially or wholly foreign-owned enterprises" be explained? A whole series of conceptual problems puzzled the 300,000 temporary workers in Shenzhen, because the ones being exploited were themselves.

This was an "ocean" that might swell into a perilous situation at any time. Here lay hidden shoals that might cause ships to capsize at any time, namely the conflicts between the interests of capital and labor; the conflicts between the interests of the representatives of capital and the direct controllers of enterprises and those of the workers, and the conflicting interests among investors; as well as conflicts of interests among the workers. This was an ocean of multiple interests between Chinese and foreigners, between one person and another, and between one group and another that had never been encountered heretofore.

Shenzhen was like a huge ship carrying a 300,000 temporary work force that was tossing and sailing tortuously on the ocean.

Contradictions and Conflicts

16 January 1986.

The machinery in the finished-goods workshop of the Zhongguan Printing and Dyeing Company, Limited in Shenzhen suddenly stopped. Twenty-six temporary Chinese workers went on strike to protest the brutality and the inhumane management methods of a certain Chen [7115], the workshop head.

The Hong Kong deputy plant manager, Wang Guotai [3769 0948 3141], rushed into the workshop ranting and raving, "Not working. Going on strike. You're all fired."

"Tomorrow the whole plant is going to halt production to hold a press conference."

The situation intensified as both sides dug in their heels.

The Hong Kong manager quickly called Hong Kong on the telephone to report the incident to the investors, and Hong Kong businessman Wang Yizhong [3769 6654 0022] made a report locally.

At the same time that the Shenzhen City Textile Industry Company and the Shenzhen City General Federation of Trade Unions received notification from the Hong Kong managers, they also received a complaint from the factory workers.

With such a sharp conflict staring them in the face, the Shenzhen leaders of departments in charge were forced to make a choice.

The foreign businessmen demanded protection of their legal rights and interests. They said, "We are a legally operating enterprises that your government has approved. The workers' strike is unreasonable. They purposely want to cause trouble for the factory. Their conduct is hurting the production of the whole plant, so the strikers must bear responsibility."

The workers also asked that their legal rights and interests be protected. They said, "We are people; we are not slaves to be oppressed and exploited. The strike is because the head of the workshop does not treat us

workers like human beings. We are only striking to get the right to be people. Right is on our side."

Just who should be protected? Just how can the rights and wrongs of the matter be judged? Just who should be extended justice? Such thorny issues frequently occurred in Shenzhen and were increasing. It seemed the leaders were mired in a slough from which it was difficult to extract themselves. It was difficult to mediate. Both sides deserved 50 whacks.

Such a way of handling matters was incomprehensible to the temporary workers.

"We are all in the same trench, so why not protect us?"

The "headmen" have troubles of their own: It is not easy to get foreign businessmen and foreign capital into the country, so don't make them want to leave. It is easy to get rid of a helpful person, but not easy to get one!

Therefore, the leaders had to say the following: "In the three kinds of partially or wholly foreign-owned enterprises, we must both safeguard the legal rights and interests of labor, and also safeguard the legal rights and interests of capital."

This formulation seemed even-handed and extraordinarily just; however, the realities of the conflict did not permit one to adopt such a seemingly fair and equitable attitude and standpoint. This was because the conflicts between the two sides were fundamentally difficult to reconcile.

Capital wanted high quotas, high quality, and high profits, but the increasingly maturing and conscious temporary workers wanted high wages, high benefits, and high welfare services. When economic interests were accompanied with political demands for democracy, human rights, and freedom, this made the already difficult to mediate conflicts even sharper and more complex.

Shenzhen was exhibiting a completely new set of interests in the midst of opening to the outside world. The workers needed to gain a renewed understanding, and the leaders also had to have a new appreciation. The Chinese manager of one plant was an old comrade who said the following to us:

"Before liberation, we conducted underground struggle in factories in which leading workers slowed down or went on strike in a struggle with capital to oppose exploitation, oppose oppression, gain freedom, and strive for liberation, and we had a lot of fun doing it. But nowadays, we have to protect workers rights and safeguard the rights of capital as well. This is easy to say, but hard as hell to do. You simply don't know just what to do."

His face wore a sad expression.

"Since you have come to visit Shenzhen's temporary workers, I don't know whether you heard about the Pan Yuming [3382 3768 2494] affair?"

This old comrade told us the following story.

Pan Yuming was a temporary worker in the Kaiyuan Shoe Factory, a Sino-Japanese joint venture. One day he did not write on the blackboard the figures showing progress in production every two hours as factory regulations required him to do. When the Japanese technician, Hashizume Masami, came over to get him to write them down, no interpreter was in the workshop at the time, and Pan Yuming did not understand Japanese. So, Pan Yuming did not know what Hashizume Masami meant when he glared and jabbered at him. He just sat there without rising to his feet.

Hashizume Masami mistakenly supposed that Pan Yuming was refusing to carry out his instructions. He seized him by the collar, and dragged him toward the blackboard.

Pan Yuming laughed to make light of it. Caught up in the moment, he grabbed Hashizume Masami's work cap and put it on his own head; then he made faces to his colleagues making them burst into laughter.

Hashizume Masami was furious. Angrily, he raised a tool he was carrying in his hand and struck Pan on the head with it. Immediately, blood ran from Pan Yuming's head. He was taken to the hospital where he was found to have a scalp wound.

After this event, a commotion broke out among the workers. In order to mollify the workers' feelings, the Kaiyuan Company instructed Hashizume Masami to conduct an open survey of all the staff members and workers in the company and to apologize to Pan Yuming. Economically, in addition to bearing responsibility for compensating Pan for wages and bonuses lost while on sick leave, as well as paying his medical fees, an additional HK\$500 [Hong Kong dollars] allowance was paid him.

Pan Yuming felt the matter was handled quite fairly at the time, and had no objections.

Not long afterward, however, he lodged another complaint with the district trade union asking that this matter be rehandled as a political case. He said, "This is not a simple economic matter. Think about it. Why did the Japanese strike us Chinese on the eve of the national anniversary? Such conduct shows contempt for the People's Republic of China. My grandfather was killed by the Japanese devils when they invaded China, and now I have been struck by a Japanese. These new and old scores should be settled together."

He demanded that Hashizume Masami be tried according to law and either be sentenced or expelled from the country at once. He also demanded further compensation of HK\$9,000.

Some workers supported Young Pan's actions considering this to be a morale booster for the Chinese.

The plant management considered this an unreasonable demand, however, and would not consider it.

After careful study, the district labor union finally concluded that capital had handled this matter quite reasonably, so it approved capital's views on the final handling.

"Shit. Are you Chinese or aren't you?" Young Pan and some of the workers were extremely dissatisfied.

"Why do you always stick up for others? You receive quite a few benefits from them, so you become lackeys of the Japanese devils..."

The Pan Yuming story made me sigh. When I was visiting Shenzhen, I came to understand quite a few tragedies involving the temporary workers. To tell the truth, I sympathized with the inhuman conditions in which some of them found themselves, their strenuous labor, and not receiving compensation commensurate with their work. Nevertheless, the facts also made me think about another matter, namely that, under certain circumstances, the thinking and the personal qualities of our workers have not kept pace with development. Or is it that the "three kinds of partially or wholly foreign-owned enterprises" as a form and their management methods are out of line with objective reality?

The narrowly defined interests and the exclusion of foreigners that has grown up among Chinese over a long period of time means that from the very outset some joint-venture enterprises in Shenzhen face a predicament from which it is difficult to extricate themselves.

"Hello, Miss. Sorry, but I forgot to get my room key. Please open my room for me, will you?"

A bearded guest from Macao called out to the young woman.

This was in a high-class hotel in Shenzhen, a Sino-Hong Kong joint venture having an elegant atmosphere, and that was quiet and comfortable.

The female receptionists and service personnel in the hotel had all been tested and evaluated when they were hired, only one in a hundred being selected. After being hired, these fortunate female temporary workers were immediately sent to a four-star hotel in Hong Kong where, under instruction from a master worker, they studied "refined service" for two months.

When they put on their fastidiously cared for textured skirts and appeared before the guests, they looked for all the world like bouquets of lotus blossoms that had just emerged from the water. However, changing a person's internal qualities is far more difficult than making surfaces changes. These pretty maidens, no matter whether from poor or wealthy homes, were all the apples of somebody's eye. Their way of life and their conventional

education for the past 20 years turned some of them into indolent, willful, overly spoiled, and not very serious-minded people.

Just when this floor service person was about to get the key to open the door for the guest, the telephone at the service station suddenly rang.

"Hello. How are you?"

"Oh. It's you"

It was a fellow villager. "When one fellow villager meets another, their eyes become misty." This is Chinese warmth. They had not been in touch with each other for a long time. She was a receptionist in another hotel.

The two prattled away...

The guest waited impatiently. How could it take a quarter of an hour to get a key?

When he reached the service station, the young woman was still on the telephone.

"Miss. I've been waiting a long time; you... "

Splat! The key was thrown on the service counter. While talking into the telephone receiver, she pointed to the key as if to say sorry, but I am busy; please open the door yourself.

The guest from Macao had traveled in many countries, but he had never come upon such a backward way of doing things. He was incredulous. That evening he wrote a sharply worded letter to the hotel manager.

"This is simply an upside-down way of doing business!" the Hong Kong manager shouted furiously. "You'll pay for this. You're fired!"

"Why do you want to fire me? What did I do wrong?" Tearfully, she explained, "Just because I had him open the room door himself? This is the way we're accustomed to doing things. Anyhow, this was my first time. It didn't make a bad impression on foreigners. That Macao gentleman is one of us Chinese, isn't he?"

She had a hundred reasons for explaining herself.

"He is a guest. He is God. He is our hotel's, yours, and also my God. MY GOD, do you understand? Serving him is more important than anything."

The Hong Kong manager wanted to "execute one as a warning to others."

In this case of clear-cut right and wrong, educating or punishing her would not help this female temporary worker to mature. Strict control would make her into a whole person.

But the key was that the Chinese head of the joint venture had said that "in trifling matters, there should be no firing. If the person admitted wrong and changed, the matter should be forgotten."

Differences between the heads of the Chinese and the Hong Kong sides of joint ventures were of long standing.

When the Hong Kong party invested in the mainland, naturally it was for the purpose of making higher profits. Thus, he must exert strict control to decrease expenditures. According to some people, in order to make a profit, one might not scruple at breaking the law or doing something reckless.

The Chinese partners were caught between a rock and a hard place. They wanted to run an enterprise that was distinctively Chinese, so they had to both cooperate and be wary. Making money was making money, but they could not have a one-track mind.

Frequent political struggles had made the Chinese highly tense. Furthermore, in Shenzhen, on the front line of China's reform, some people could not help but be apprehensive and filled with trepidation.

Might this situation and these policies not change after all? In some future year, might not people look back and reevaluate this period of history? Some people did not want people to point at their backs and revile them as "capitalist lackeys." So, they had to be tactful, and positively not besmirch themselves.

The leaders' outlook might shape public opinion, but public opinion might magnify discontent at various junctures.

Such discontent finally found a suitable "vehicle."

"They are the masters; we are slaves. Is this what is called socialism?"

"Capitalists are exploitive by nature; we can't work together."

"We are not going to sell our souls for the capitalists..."

Thus, this hotel of several hundred people was suddenly transformed into two large, diametrically opposed camps.

Chinese and Hong Kong personnel rubbed elbows with each other, undercut each other, and passively slowed down. They even selected different languages when speaking among each other. The Hong Kong personnel conversed in English, while the Chinese personnel used the local dialect.

When the Chinese held personnel meetings, the Hong Kong side tried every possible means to monitor them. They asked what the meetings were about and who was to be made to suffer. One Hong Kong duty person told a Chinese privately, "We really are afraid you will engage in class struggle again."

The hotel's losses were serious and going from bad to worse.

Feeling that they faced a dismal future, the Hong Kong businessmen prepared to withdraw to Hong Kong, after which they filed a complaint with the central authorities.

Once the higher authorities discovered the problem at this hotel, they severely criticized the Chinese side's "leftist" trend of thought and methods, and they transferred them out of their jobs.

Their successors adopted a new way of thinking and practical methods, as a result of which the tense situation from which there had been no turning back began to ease, and operation of the hotel also took a turn for the better.

What with the contradictions and conflicts, the solidity of people under the former unified domain conditions were no longer to be found in Shenzhen. Apart from the clashes between ideological concepts and between methods of administration and management in the "three kinds of partially and completely foreign-owned" enterprises, contradictions also frequently occurred between labor and capital, becoming daily more intense.

Statistics from the Shekou industrial zone of Shenzhen for just the two years 1986 and 1987 showed 21 incidents of temporary worker work stoppages and strikes. Since 1988, temporary worker work stoppages and strikes increased and grew both in frequency and scale.

When I was winding up my visit to the temporary workers and was about to leave Shenzhen, I received a letter signed by several temporary workers that read as follows:

Everyone of us temporary workers in the Shenzhen Hubei Electronics Plant are furious. We have worked hard for the plant, but every month unexplained deductions are made from many of our salaries, and this has become more serious during the past several months. We do not know where to complain; all we can do is quit and leave this plant. But the plant wants to dock us for another two months work if we do.

Today, when we went to get our pay, a rather high water fee was deducted, each person paying 32 yuan. (Note: the water is frequently shut off here.) And our rent jumped suddenly from 15 to 36 yuan. They said that 87 yuan per person would be deducted to get us a temporary residence certificate, but as of now, we have seen neither hide nor hair of the residence certificates. After working hard for a month, all we have to show for it now is several tens of yuan in wages. Huh! What kind of a world is this in which there is nowhere to find justice? Is it really possible that, in socialist China, the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone can be so dark today? The broad masses of workers heave a sigh again; the specter of the former old China is appearing before our eyes. We hope you will find justice for us, and extend socialist justice to us..."

All of the above is true. We hope you will investigate it.

Signature of witnesses: Luo Guanhu [5012 0385 5706], Li Jianhui [2621 1696 6540], Gong Xuwen [7895 1331

2429], He Xiongguang [0149 7160 0342], Song Antang [1345 1344 2768], Luo Yongqiang [5012 3057 1730], and Yang Qingyong [2799 1987 0516].

Address: Hubei Electronics Plant, Hubei Village, South Workshop No. 3, Shenzhen City

What is so puzzling is that a lever can't be found to regulate the contradictions and conflicts between capital and labor in the "partially or fully foreign-owned" enterprises.

Yes. Some people say such a lever is the "Labor Law."

The law can restrict both parties across all boundary lines.

Where is the "Labor Law"?

Lawless World

27-30 January 1988.

Some of the temporary workers in Shenzhen call this "the four black days."

During these four short days, three suicides occurred among the female temporary workers in Shenzhen.

Two of the three returned to the netherworld. The other one, the 22-year-old maiden named Zhou, may possibly have to support herself on a walking stick to complete the final journey of her earthly life...

Is it women's weakness that creates such tragedies in human life?

"Miss Zhou, the manager wants you."

On that day, the Zhou girl was humming a song as usual when she reported for work. She had not even begun to work when she was called away.

After a long time, people saw her return, dragging herself along like a dead fish. She made no response at all to other people's questions, but only fastened a blank gaze on the overcast skies outside the window.

Miss Zhou did her work diligently, so she had been assigned from temporary work to office work. She was not as lacking in seriousness as some. She did whatever was required, and she did well in her work. Nevertheless, she was suddenly dismissed. This was cruel for a totally mentally unprepared rural maiden.

"I do not understand... why I was fired, why..."

She could only repeat this sentence over and over.

On the morning of the second day, the clouds dispersed and the warm rays of the sun caressed the autumn people, but the maiden Zhou did not feel these sun's rays. She was standing before an open window on a floor

high up in the office building. She had implored repeatedly to no avail. No one could change, nor was there any way to change, the decisions of the director and the manager.

"We do not need you. Miss Zhou, you should look for some other employment."

Do not need her. Of course, they will have some new person take her place.

She had made a contribution to the enterprise, but now the enterprise no longer needs her. The world does not need her any longer. She looked at the azure sky outside the window, one glistening tear after another rolling down her cheeks...

For three whole days she lingered between life and death before returning to this world that had caused her so much suffering and despair. After regaining consciousness, she still babbled, "I did nothing wrong, but I was fired..."

People came to see this ill-starred girl.

"Yes! there was this person like me who came from the mountains and did not have much education who was a temporary worker. People always looked down on him..."

"...On the day I was dismissed, I could not sleep that night. The faces of my family kept appearing in my brain. It would soon be Lunar New Year's time. Daddy, mommy, and five younger brothers and younger sisters were waiting for me in the village to bring money so they could celebrate the New Year."

"But I do not have any money now, and I do not have a job. When I return, what can I say to the family? Whenever I think of my mama who worked so hard to bring me up, my heart aches as though a knife were being twisted in it... I can't figure it out. Why this is I cannot understand. So, on the morning of that day..."

At 22 years of age, she was a pretty and vivacious youth, but she ended it herself. People sighed at the tragedy of the maiden Zhou, and they sighed at the tragedy of the temporary workers.

But this was not just the tragedy of the maiden Zhou, nor was it just the tragedy of the Shenzhen female temporary workers. A comrade in the Shenzhen Municipal General Federation of Trade Unions told us that labor disputes have broken out constantly between the temporary workers and enterprises during the past two years. Between 60 and 70 percent of them have been attributable to investors' failure to honor economic contracts in violation of the workers' legal rights and interests; 20 percent of them have been caused by investors' purposely violating workers' democratic rights and personal rights; and 10 percent have resulted from the poor quality of workers and their unreasonable demands.

Careful dissection of the tragedy of Miss Zhou, as well as the miserable misfortunes of numerous female temporary workers, raises the question of why some originally very simple and completely avoidable conflicts and clashes are frequently intensified in Shenzhen enterprises.

Why is it that, blinded by greed, some managers and owners do as they please without being effectively regulated and stopped in Shenzhen?

Shenzhen's 300,000 temporary workers have created tremendous wealth for society, yet frequently they do not get the protection of society as laborers and contributors.

Flowers are used for decoration, but although the female temporary workers in the Shanxia Silk Flower Factory in Baoan County, which is under the jurisdiction of Shenzhen, are in a sea of flowers, they are not at all happy. All they feel is the suffering of endless labor. These girls even hate these flowers. They feel that their lives are like these silk flowers: false and trampled upon.

In order to increase silk flower output to create high profits, Hong Kong businessmen are bent on raising work standards, forcing the workers to perform overtime. In the words of one female temporary worker, "The boss wishes he could stop the world from turning so there would be only days without nights. That way we would have to keep on working."

The female workers in the silk flower plant have to work 16 or 17 hours a day. They may not rest on Sunday, nor do they have holidays off. Overtime wages are also extremely low, or sometimes not even given. Finally, even the amount of time and the number of times the women may go to the toilet is regulated. They are permitted to go only three times each day for no more than eight minutes each time.

With nowhere to turn, the female workers wrote an appeal to the Shenzhen Women's Federation:

"There is a total absence of justice here. We are mechanical robots during the day and wooden people at night. We are so tired we could drop. Please get us one Sunday off each month!"

The trade union women's federation organization intervened in this matter.

The foreign investor ushered them into his office ceremoniously and said, "We are doing things according to the law. You have no legal regulations that do not permit us to produce on overtime. Furthermore, you do not have laws that clearly regulate and limit the amount of overtime work."

The comrades from the trade union produced regulations and policies by way of reminding him that the Shenzhen municipal government had issued regarding worker overtime in "partially or wholly foreign-owned"

enterprises. He said, "I know all about these, but they are your internal regulations and policies that we are not required to implement."

China has no labor law.

The Shenzhen Special Economic Zone has no labor law either.

To rely on a few people or an organization at any level to intervene is weak and ineffective.

However, in Hong Kong, that place we call a "capitalist paradise," which neighbors Shenzhen, there is a detailed labor law that includes an hourly work law, a minimum wage law, a work injury and disability compensation law, and a work dismissal limitation law. When disputes between labor and capital occur, the labor law is infinitely detailed as to the ways and means to be used in dealing with them. Violators, whether labor or capital, cannot escape responsibility. Matters are handled according to law; the law is above all else; and both labor and capital are restricted and protected by the law.

"Can a labor law really protect labor?" I posed this question to Zhang Bo [1728 2672], the chairman of the Shenzhen Municipal General Federation of Trade Unions Office.

He had conducted surveys of trade union work in Hong Kong on several occasions, and he had a real feel and understanding of this matter. He told me the following:

"Article 31 of the Hong Kong Labor Law provides as follows: Discrimination against trade unions is in violation of the law. Those who discriminate against trade unions are subject to payment of a fine and imprisonment from between 15 days to one year. When I was surveying Hong Kong, I went to a court where a boss was fined and sentenced to jail for 15 days in accordance with the provision of 'discriminating against a trade union in violation of the law.'"

He had some thoughts and feelings about the formulation and promulgation of a "Chinese Labor Law."

"When we see constant contradictions and tragedies involving temporary workers, we feel very bad. As trade union cadres, it is painful for us not to be able to protect the rights and interests of our workers. But it is truly difficult for us to do some things. We have mouths and we have reasons to speak out, but we cannot. Actually, only when there is a detailed labor law and attendant labor dispute courts can numerous thorny problems be readily solved."

During a period of eight years countless rich and varied enterprises in buildings of all kinds have suddenly been built in Shenzhen from the mouth of the Zhu Jiang to Dapeng Bay, as well as a water, electricity, gas, telecommunications, and highways infrastructure for "partially or wholly foreign-owned" enterprises. Some people say that Shenzhen has created the finest climate to attract foreign capital. Sadly, we have not erected a bridge

between foreign traders and the hundreds of thousands of workers in this most sensitive and danger-prone unresolved area.

The pertinent regulations and policies that the Shenzhen municipal government and departments concerned have drawn up have not been very well implemented at the lower levels. Some people maintain that one very important reason is that the regulations do not have the binding force of law and attendant enforcement measures are lacking.

Shenzhen needs a labor code.

Shenzhen City has 300,000 temporary workers, more than 14,000 of them registered in "partially or wholly foreign-owned" enterprises, so why has no workable local labor control law been enacted? I made the rounds of numerous units in a diligent search for the reasons.

The answer is discouraging: Shenzhen has no People's Congress Standing Committee, so it is impossible to enact local laws.

It is inconceivable that this can be the reason.

According to some reports, a Shenzhen labor code is close to enactment. Currently, one is awaiting passage by the Guangdong Provincial People's Congress.

These several hundred thousand temporary workers are suffering meanwhile in this difficult-to-comprehend climate and atmosphere.

Perhaps it will take the tragic sacrifice of more temporary workers before the "Labor Code" emerges from the womb.

Certainly, the formulation and perfection of a genuinely workable labor code in China is no easy matter. Time is needed to put it into practice and to examine it from a theoretical standpoint, but do we have no way other than this?

Necessary Sacrifices

Sometimes, even though it bears a lot of fruit, agronomists have to cut a tree in two in order to graft a new variety that possesses greater vitality and is of higher quality.

In order to win a war in which forces are evenly matched, clever commanders have no choice but to abandon, for strategic reasons, a victory that is already within their grasp.

In order to break away from youthful ways and mature into truly social beings, we sometimes have no choice but to shake ourselves free from the warm mother love from which we are loathe to part.

This is a necessary renunciation.

"Love, dreams, dependence, unrealizable expectations, and all the things we have to abandon in order to mature, we must abandon."

After surveying mankind's social development and the process of human maturation, the American sociologist Judith Wei-er-si-te [4850 1422 2448 3676], who has many philosophical ideas, made a very profound statement that helps throw light on our thinking today.

She said, "In the process of becoming 'self' we have to give up a lot of matchless paradises and impossibly safe and happy illusions, as well as a comforting and pure world in which right and wrong are clearly defined and completely separate. In the process of becoming 'self,' we enter a world that makes us solitary, powerless, and psychologically conflicted. We become conscious of our own fears and worth, and we ask, 'Is this me?'"

This is an abnormal fear, but it is also a process that mankind must go through in order to mature. On this matter, a society is sometimes like an individual in that it yearns for instantaneous development just like a person, while it also fears the loss of "self" in the process of development, turning into "someone else." Thus, it exhibits a sad state of conflict.

When I inquired into the temporary worker problem in Shenzhen, I sometimes felt that such conflicts were controlling some people's thinking and influencing some people's actions. Practice is the sole standard for examining truth, but here it seems that this injunction is not carried out to the letter because of feelings of dread and contradictions.

I asked for advice on the "Labor Law" issue from some experts and scholars in Shenzhen who had studied law. They believed that, with slight modifications, some of the laws currently in use in Hong Kong and other territories and countries were very applicable to "partially or wholly foreign-owned" enterprises in Shenzhen and in other provinces and cities.

However, there were others who voiced opposition.

Their reasoning was very complete and difficult to refute: "We are practicing a distinctively Chinese brand of socialism that permits the introduction of foreign capitalist advanced technology and capital, including modern management methods. However, we are resolutely opposed to the capitalist superstructure. If we suppose that we should take whatever is useful, wouldn't that be tantamount to complete Westernization? How would the Chinese distinctiveness be expressed?"

This perspective of the leaders is on the superstructure.

Laws are part of the superstructure, so their introduction would naturally be a pollution of "Chinese distinctiveness."

Just what does "distinctively Chinese" mean? We are also exploring the answer to this question, we should not

come to a conclusion prematurely. Sufferings and perplexities have to do with whether our understanding of socialism and capitalism is completely real.

The need to make sacrifices is a law of development, and it is also a choice that is consistent with laws.

In the past, our revolutionary goal was "to oppose exploitation" and "to oppose oppression." The practice of socialism permits no "exploitation of man by man." This is an authoritative conclusion that the heads of China finalized during the past many years. However, in Shenzhen today, such exploitation not only exists in large measure, but is accorded respect and protection. In the past, this was simply unthinkable, but this unthinkable thing is a living reality today.

Faced with this reality, we are puzzled. When we look back at history, we have a sense of pain. In order to move ahead, we will have to learn how to give up things.

What knowledge and understanding do the temporary workers of Shenzhen have on this matter?

In 1989, the Department of Propaganda and Education of the Shenzhen General Federation of Trade Unions conducted a large-scale questionnaire survey among the temporary workers and contract workers in 14 sole-proprietorship and joint-venture enterprises.

In answering the question what are your feelings about working in the "three kinds of partially or wholly foreign-owned" enterprises, 88.25 percent acknowledged that they were exploited to one degree or another, and 91.2 percent felt that there was basically no use talking about a position of workers as "masters in their own house" in the "three kinds of partially or wholly foreign-owned" enterprises. One just worked there.

This state of affairs may cause some of our leaders bitter hatred; however, it is this reality that created Shenzhen and a new form of social development.

I asked Zhang Hanming, director of the Shenzhen Municipal General Federation of Trade Unions, his views on this issue in a long talk I had with him. He said, "It is painful to face this reality. The most fundamental goal of the socialist revolution was to enable the broad masses of working people to become masters of their own affairs, but the reality of Shenzhen's present opening to the outside world is that one cannot have matters the way one wants. This means that we have to have an overall line of thinking about development and a new understanding of socialism. We have to make an assessment based on practice being the sole standard for examining truth, understand the new circumstances and new problems in reform and opening to the outside world, and not be metaphysical."

Speaking in the vernacular with a Guangdong accent, Zhang Hanming spoke to me with fervor and assurance, from time to time, taking a cigarette from a cigarette box to help him with this seemingly difficult line of thinking.

"Respecting and protecting the legal rights and interests of the capitalists, and acknowledging their temporary exploitation of the workers is beneficial. It is advantageous for the country's long-term historical development. We should teach the workers to unify present and long-term interests, and particularly to look at this issue from the heights of the development of productivity. We should teach the workers that they will have to make certain temporary sacrifices in order to improve their own standard of living, and for long-term benefit of the country."

Acknowledging and understanding this point may possibly be more realistic than simply teaching the workers theoretically that they should be "masters in their own house" in the "three kinds of partially or wholly foreign-owned" enterprises.

To sacrifice present interests for long-term interests, to abandon "grand" theories for the sake of true realities, to bear incredible suffering for the sake of future prosperity, and to take one step back in order to take two steps forward are absolutely consistent with the objective laws of development of things. However, let everyone understand one point very clearly, and that is that this will not be very easy, and it will take time and practice.

Happily, some of the temporary workers who are the "third-class" members of Shenzhen society have begun to recognize and accept this point of view. In the questionnaire survey that the Propaganda and Education Department of the Shenzhen Municipal General Federation of Trade Unions circulated, 27 percent of temporary workers and contract workers believed that "the existence of exploitation should be recognized, and this exploitation should be accepted for the sake of the country's long-term interests."

This is a magnificent line of thinking of Shenzhen's temporary workers, and recognizing it is a historical advance for Shenzhen society.

This is a major premise, and very many problems can unfold from this great premise.

Contradictions constantly occur in practice. The solution of one contradiction always leads to another contradiction. Society develops and matures through contradictions.

Recognition that exploitation exists does not mean that one should complacently and passively play a pathetic role as the exploited. Reasonableness is the key in this proposition. Therefore, we should not only recognize the existence of exploitation, but also make "self-emancipation" yet another problem facing the Shenzhen temporary workers.

The questionnaire survey that the Propaganda and Education Department of the Shenzhen Municipal General Federation of Trade Unions conducted also touched on the sensitive topics of how to deal with the capitalists' excessive exploitation, how to deal with conflicts

between workers and capitalists, and what actions temporary workers should take to achieve a solution?

The statistics show the following:

37 percent believed "it is better to endure for the sake of the jobs."

32.8 percent believed "I should rely on the organization. I should do as the organization says and ask the organization to help me solve the problem."

However, 8.1 percent felt that "resolution of the conflicts must depend on the actions of both parties to the conflict. Reliance on an outsider frequently leads to outsmarting oneself. Therefore, we must unite, rely on the workers' own strength, and use reason, interests, and integrity to resist in order to gain what is due us."

The lack of complete unity of understanding and views within the temporary labor force makes the contradictions and clashes between labor and capital more complex.

This complexity acts to mature the "social role" in the tempering of the temporary workers.

Chapter II

Painful "Liberation"

Group after group of young country people left the land of their ancestors to come to Shenzhen to "found a world." At the time, they did not truly understand themselves. The process whereby a person comes to know himself is difficult and slow. Philosophers say that "the most deadly kind of suffering comes from fighting to become oneself."

That they left the land of their ancestors did not mean that they were liberated; they still had to leave "self" in order to be liberated from their numb souls. This is liberation in the true sense.

The broad masses of temporary workers in Shenzhen entered the city with an incomplete personality. Industrialized production, group-style jobs, and irritating production relationships posed merciless challenges and conflicts for their thinking, behavior, way of life, and philosophy for dealing with the world.

The eruption that follows forbearance and silent repression or repression that lasts too long is a circumstance of the times that is fraught with anger and gloom, fraught with stubbornness and noise, fraught with cruelty and tender feelings, and fraught with tragic roles and happy situations. Only because of this can we lend an attentive ear to the noise of the onrushing advance of history...

Sad Silence

Here we have a difficult-to-describe rudimentary, dilapidated work shed whose area is, at most, slightly more than 20 square meters, yet 36 female workers live here. Each person has an average of only 0.55 square meters,

which is roughly the same space that a child's cradle occupies, but these 17- and 18-year-old girls have to live here...

At the female workers' dormitory of the Longgao Silk Flower Plant in the Nantou District of Shenzhen, a comrade from the Women's Federation is crying. "They build a pig sty, and they want to give them a space the size of a mat, never mind that they are people..."

It is into such a space so narrow that it can hardly hold a person that they have to huddle their developing bodies and endure.

The do not even know enough yet to take a stand for their most basic living conditions. All they know is to endure and to remain silent.

If people do not stand up for their own living space and conditions, how can they become truly whole people? If they do not treat themselves as people, how can they gain the respect of others?

Biologically, a woman's nature is generally more fragile than a man's, but the special traditional education of females and the moral restraints of Chinese society makes them more restrained and more careful. They always maintain a more inhibited attitude toward life's misfortunes. This result is clearly attributable to education and convention.

Our group arrived at the Aili Glove factory paint shop in the Lohu district.

Walking into that gloomy workshop produced a suffocating feeling. There was high-decibel noise, toxic powder, electric wires strung across the room, and goods piled up. Even were you to stand at the entrance, the fearful blast of heat that blew against your face and assailed your nostrils was hard to bear.

The workshop seemed crowded. It lacked good ventilation equipment, and the workers lacked needed labor protection. It was in this polluted space where it was difficult to survive that they sweated and gasped for breath to create wealth.

Faced with such an abominable working environment, the male and female temporary workers were able to endure as ever and to maintain silence. This was a silence and an endurance that they paid for with their own lives.

A silk flower plant in the Nantou district. It is 2300 at night and the female workers, tired from the day's toil, are all sound asleep.

Suddenly, the light is turned on, and several men and women are standing before the women's beds.

"Don't anyone move. Everyone open your footlocker and bag for inspection."

A "woman foreman" spoke to the sleepy-eyed female workers.

The footlockers were opened up and their contents churned from the bottom to the top. Bundles were opened and their contents strewn on the bed...

The Hong Kong boss heard a report that some women had "stolen" silk flowers and taken them back to the dormitory, so this was the reason for this sudden middle-of-the-night search.

However, have after ransacking for a long time, there was no sign of a silk flower, so the searchers left in a huff.

The women workers lay down again and the work shed became quiet once again.

It really should not have been quiet! People are entitled to their personal freedom. By what right can others be transgressed upon at will?

Lamentably, there was no such concept at all in the heads of these women. They even felt that we are workers under other's control. For the boss and the foreman to search them was as it should be, reasonable, and perfectly justified.

These women were searched like sneak thieves, and these women's reputation had been impuned, but they did not know enough to appeal and to bring charges against such illegal conduct.

The following incident occurred in New York City in the United States. A supermarket worker very politely stopped a woman suspected of carrying some food in her bag for which she had not paid. The suspicion proved false. But this was not the end of the matter. This woman sued in court claiming that her reputation and character had been publicly defiled and damaged. She demanded that the market restore her reputation and pay for damaging her reputation. The court heard the case and ruled in favor of the woman. As a result, this supermarket apologized publicly in New York's largest newspaper and paid \$10,000 for damaging her reputation.

In this "modern" metropolis of Shenzhen, however, a substantial number of the hundreds of thousands of temporary workers do not understand the law, much less do they understand a person's rights or a person's reputation and dignity. They meekly resign themselves to maltreatment, knowing only silence and endurance.

One dark and brutal night, four male workers knelt on the frigid and muddy ground begging for mercy: "Boss, don't beat us. I'm going. We're going..."

The Hong Kong boss stood off to one side looking on complacently with folded arms. Two hired "managers" cuffed and kicked the temporary workers kneeling on the ground, beating them mercilessly.

This was a tragedy that took place at the Aishi Electronics Plant in the Luohu district of Shenzhen.

The Aishi Electronics Plant is an enterprise that processes imported materials. It is operated jointly by the

Huangbei Street Office Associated Enterprise Company in the Luohu district of Shenzhen and the Hong Kong Aishi Electronics Plant. Although nominally jointly operated, power over major issues is largely under control of the Hong Kong business. For some time, it violated the personal rights and interests of temporary workers, illegally searching the women's dormitory, purposely delaying payment of worker wages, and arbitrarily dismissing people.

In October 1987, the Aishi Electronics Plant instituted piecework, privately setting excessive piecework standards that most people could not attain. Many temporary workers worked overtime until midnight without being able to fulfill the prescribed norms. However, since the work they performed was less than the norm, the plant refused to pay overtime or provide a night meal.

On the morning of 3 November, 53 extremely weary temporary workers, who had worked overtime until after 0300 in the morning, did not report for work.

Without considering at all the reason why the workers did not report for work, the Hong Kong firm immediately announced their collective dismissal. The manager said provocatively, "Three-legged frogs are hard to find, but two-legged people are everywhere."

The workers appealed to the Luohu district CPC Committee, and the department concerned there immediately dispatched a person to the plant to investigate. After several meetings with the plant authorities, the following agreement was reached:

The plant authorities' views were to be respected and the decision to dismiss the workers was upheld; however, for every worker dismissed, the plant authorities were to pay a separation allowance of 50 yuan to cover their eating expenses and travel costs to return home.

The plant authorities turned hostile, however, and refused to make payment. When the workers went to draw the money, the Hong Kong boss said: "You want 50 yuan; then go to the labor bureau to collect it."

At midnight on 12 November, the Hong Kong boss and plant manager, as well as two "managers" that the Hong Kong firm had privately hired, angrily kicked open the door to the dormitory in which Yang Donghui [2799 2639 6540] and others lived. Using the pretext that "temporary workers could not remain in a plant dormitory after dismissal," they seized and beat them viciously. Plant personnel also searched their baggage without authorization, and threw their mosquito nets, quilts, clothing, and towels outside into a wastewater ditch. They also stomped flat their rice bowls and cups...

They threatened the temporary workers kneeling on the ground, saying, "No filing a report with the authorities tomorrow. Whoever files a report will not live to spend the New Year back home."

The Aishi Electronics Plant's arbitrary dismissals and illegal beating of the temporary workers immediately

provoked a reaction from society. Newspapers disclosed in a prominent position this criminal behavior of seriously violating human rights.

However, the "conscientious effort" to deal with the situation that was handed down by an organization at a higher level was easy-going. First, disciplinary action was taken against the plant manager, but all the staff members and workers were required to perform self-criticism. Second, payment of compensation was ordered for the medical bills of the workers who had been beaten and for the belongings that had been damaged. Third, the Hong Kong boss was instructed to write a guarantee that such an incident would not occur in the future.

Just these three written articles settled this ugly matter. The injured parties never even thought that they should file suit with the law enforcement authorities to let the law punish the trampling under foot of the law.

They did not understand the law, and was it possible that higher authorities and the trade union organization did not understand the law either?

Some people say that China is without tragedy, and that there are no tragic events in Chinese tragedies, but only some sad events and pathetic injured parties. They may be adept at haggling, but they are never able to dominate the market. They do not have the strength; they do not know about collective power; and they basically have no understanding of "Who am I?"

Is this the result of their individual lack of knowledge and personality, or has our conventional society created it?

As far as we are concerned, today's society of laws remains only an ideal.

During my visit to Shenzhen, I several times encountered instances in which female workers spoke about covering their faces and crying in sorrow. I know that these tears are the only accompaniment to many female worker's silence and loneliness.

Tears are women's greatest defense weapon. They are a lament and they are also a self-comfort. They are a way of letting go, yet they are also a form of cool-headed repression. Aside from tears, women seem to have no other effective way of expressing themselves.

"Huh! What difference can we temporary workers make? Will anyone listen to us? They will only blame us for our sad lot in life." A female temporary worker told me haltingly, "Heaven will not protect us either..."

She was wearing a silvery white cross on her chest. Such low-grade aluminum religious articles can be found all over Shenzhen in stalls laid out on the ground.

Can Jesus save them?

I grieve for them. These are people who, because of their low educational level and because of their having been

brought up to be straightforward, good-natured, simple, and honest, are seen to be easily pushed around; these are people who are always easily satisfied because of their meager imaginations and desires; and these are people whose bone marrow and blood are suffused with the meek resignation to adversity of their forefathers, and who know their place. In their eyes, human dignity comes after value.

Recognize realities and learn how to survive.

The real reason why very many temporary workers in Shenzhen do not believe they can achieve emancipation by relying on their own strength is that they never personally tested their ability to gain freedom. But comes the day when they realize the benefits they can obtain within fixed objectives, they will courageously and valourously become duty bound not to turn back.

The "Eruption" of Anger

The Kaida Toy Factory located in the Shekou industrial district of Shenzhen is a foreign sole proprietorship that makes a substantial profit. All sorts of novel toys are produced here for shipment to Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, and even to markets in Europe and the United States. The bright, colorful, and very pretty electrical toys are "molded" from the blood and sweat of the female workers in the Kaida Toy Factory. They make "flesh and bones" for "Mickey Mouse," and they make profits for the bosses of foreign firms.

They expend several times as much labor as workers in Hong Kong, yet they receive only one-tenth the wages.

As far as the women workers are concerned, if it were only a matter of making less money, they could bear it; but they cannot bear the boss taking advantage of their silence and endurance, and his insatiable greed.

They are forced to work between 14 and 15 hours daily, and several evenings the boss uses "lots of orders and busy production" as a pretext for forcing the female workers to continue working until 0400 or 0500 in the morning. Then, after only three or four hours sleep, they continue to work during the day.

They have no Sundays off, and no time off after eight hours. They do not even have any time for themselves to do a little daydreaming. Their joy in being young women is frittered away in front of the workbench in deadly dull years of privation in which there is neither day nor night.

People are not machines, and even machines, which are made of steel, become fatigued and have to be stopped for a rest.

The women workers are too weary from work. The sickness rate rises rapidly, and several female workers, lacking physical strength, become dizzy and fall over at the workbench...

"Toy world" teddy bears and Mickey Mouse are still blinking their eyes.

The female workers are angry. They remember several months earlier when the "bosses" illegally searched their dormitory without their consent. They tried to get the plant to reason things out only to be subjected to gratuitous insults. They remember the kindly forbearance and silence which was repaid with greatly increased bullying. Now, human dignity suddenly revived within them.

"Give us back the right to be human!" The usually disorganized female workers now embraced "unity." There can be unity only when there are many people.

That evening, more than 30 female workers demonstrated jointly. They washed their faces, played, read, rested, and refused to do overtime work.

The utterly exasperated foremen ran to the dormitory to threaten the female workers. "If you don't report for work at once, you're all fired..."

This time the female workers employed a disdainful collective silence in dealing with them.

We oppose this inhuman treatment. We demand that overtime be no more than two hours daily. "One female worker representative stated the conditions.

"All right. You just wait..." The boss is coming.

"The plant has decided. You have been dismissed. Get your baggage right away and scram!"

The boss fired the female worker who led the strike.

"Fired? It's not that easy. We are people, and we have our personal freedom. We don't come when you say come, and go when you say go." The female workers did not know that when they became tough the boss and the foremen would not know what to do.

"What do you want to do?" They were tongue-tied.

"Want to do? Settle accounts! How much wealth have we made for you? You may want us to go, but you'll have to settle up. Then we'll sue you. We'll sue you for violating regulations."

The female workers seized the initiative.

In a situation in which both sides refused to budge, they thought about society and about organizations at various levels. Formerly, each of them had been concerned only about herself. They worked a little more each day, exceeded the norm, and got more money than others. They paid no attention to matters such as social strength, organizational strength, and the strength that comes from unity. That day they discovered that the reason people exploited them by taking a mile every time they yielded an inch and the reason they were humiliated was that they were weak individually. They were isolated from and unassisted by the outside world. They were all just individuals, and they did not bind together to form a rope.

Thereupon, they went to the Shenzhen Municipal General Federation of Trade Unions, the Labor Bureau, the Shekou District Trade Union, the district CPC Committee, and the Administrative Committee to protest. They demanded society's support.

Organizations at all levels came forward to extend justice to the female workers.

Excessive overtime had to stop. The fired female workers had to be reinstated at once, and wages for the period when they had been forced to leave the factory had to be made up.

The boss knew the weight of this intervention, but he was unwilling to admit that he had acted unreasonably. Thus, he tried every possible way to shift responsibility, quibbling on his own behalf.

The female workers would not give an inch.

The negotiators sent by the higher level organizations would not give an inch either.

A deadlock lasted for 52 days. The plant managers could not hold out. They sought to use the special nature of a "sole proprietorship" to exonerate themselves. They sought to undermine the strike by enticing some female workers with small favors and thereby eliminate the crisis. But nothing worked. If this went on, not only would it impair their ability to supply goods to foreign markets and they might be required to pay a large indemnity for contract violation, but they would be punished by the Chinese for violating regulations.

The boss had no choice but to admit his error, return the fired female workers to their jobs, and make up their wages. He announced that worker overtime in the factory would not exceed two hours each day and would be no more than four times each week. He also increased the overtime work rate.

By winning victory in this strike, the female workers at the Kaida Toy Factory strengthened their own prestige. This made them aware that one cannot depend on anyone else to show compassion and provide charity in changing one's living environment. One has to fight back for oneself.

Fighting back is the only way to realize one's strength.

The female workers' "unparalleled feat" at the Kaida Toy Factory spread like wildfire throughout the Shekou industrial zone and won the highest praise of both male and female temporary workers.

When talking with me about this incident, a male temporary worker slapped his thigh and said, "The sons of bitches. They deserved it."

Comrades in the work unit of the Shenzhen Municipal General Federation of Trade Unions also pondered the events surrounding this strike dispute.

They acknowledged that respect and protection for the legal rights and interests of foreign traders in the operation of enterprises do not mean permitting some of them to disregard humanitarianism for the sake of making high profits. Educating and guiding the workers to face facts squarely and acknowledging that capitalists who invest in enterprises on the mainland should be able to exploit to a certain extent are not the same thing as allowing the workers to become slaves whom the capitalists can rob and bully. Thus, struggle in the course of this incident was based on producing harmony without abandoning reason, interests, and moral integrity, but rather by using the principle of seeking truth from facts as a basis for the reasonable existence of the contradictory relationship between both parties. This was more noble than debased support and false compatibility.

On 19 June 1987, at the site of the construction and installation of equipment for the Guangdong Floating Method Glass Plant that the Yinggelun [5391 2706 2241] Company of Italy contracted, three Italian technicians used the pretext of looking for tools to pry open without permission four chests containing tools, agricultural things, and cash belonging to the Chinese workers.

This violation of human rights immediately aroused the strong dissatisfaction of the Chinese workers. Three workers whose tool chests had been pried open protested this rights violation to Mr. Yingnuo Feinuodi [5391 6179 6316 6179 6611], the Shekou general manager of the Yinggelun Company.

However, Feinuodi indiscriminately announced the firing of the three Chinese workers.

The three workers angrily tore up their work cards. The other 26 workers at the site said, "Fire them and we won't work either." At once, most of the Chinese workers, announcing that they were on strike, left the work site.

These 29 Chinese workers were all Grade-4 and above technical workers of rather high quality from Wuhan. Some of them were assistant engineers and they could speak foreign languages. The strike by these technical backbone cadres brought all the work to a halt at the installation site, causing the Yinggelun Company's contract plans to come to naught.

Sensing the seriousness of the situation, Feinuodi immediately went in search of the Chinese workers. He said that he would apologize to the three workers whose tool boxes had been pried open, not fire the three workers, and pay HK\$500 in compensation for losses from the opened boxes.

The Chinese workers did not accept the conditions at once. They had had their fill of insults from the capitalist investors. These people regularly scolded, ridiculed, and pushed around the Chinese workers, supposing the Chinese to be peasants who planted rice seedlings with their hands. When they called a Chinese, even though they knew his name they would not say it. They would just

pucker up their mouths and whistle for him. Before this incident occurred, other incidents had taken place in which Italian personnel without authorization pried open the tool chests of Chinese workers.

Chinese are people. They are not slaves to be trampled and insulted. The strikers felt that they had to protect the dignity of the Chinese. They would rather leave than be treated unequally. For this reason they set five conditions.

1. The troublemakers are to admit that their behavior violated the law and that the Chinese retained the right to resort to legal means.
2. The capitalist investors must apologize and put the apology in writing.
3. The troublemakers are to be fired.
4. The capitalist investors are to indemnify the workers for their economic and spiritual losses, and the workers' wages are also to be paid during the period during which the incident is being settled.
5. All consequences of this incident are to be borne by the capitalist investors.

Since the "Special Economic Zone Trade Union held the status of a juridical person, and the chairman of the trade union was a representative of the juridical person," in his capacity as a representative of the juridical person, the trade union chairman formally handed the five conditions to General Manager Feinuodi.

The Italians carefully considered and studied the five conditions. They suggested that the first one be revised to read: "The troublemakers' conduct violates the legal rights and interests of the workers." They also suggested that the third item, "troublemakers are to be fired" should be deleted.

After five days of repeated discussions between labor and capital, an agreement was finally reached.

The Italian personnel openly apologized to the Chinese personnel, and indemnified all losses.

On the 25th, after five and a half days, the strike ended.

This intensification of contradictions and their solution showed the capitalist investors the power of the Chinese workers. Thereafter, no further incidents of Italians looking down on Chinese workers occurred at the "Southern Glass" project.

Fighting back by knowing the law, uniting, being reasonable, having interests, and having moral integrity won human dignity for the Chinese workers.

"The Successful Ones" Few and Far Between

Shenzhen is a world of temporary workers.

You are aware of the presence of temporary workers virtually every minute of every hour. But the truly successful ones among the 300,000 temporary workers are few and far between.

Zhao Luzhen [6392 7216 3791] was one of the few.

In November 1982, she came from Xinfeng County in Guangdong Province to Buji Town in Baoan County, Shenzhen, to work as a temporary worker in a clothing factory. At that time, she was no more than 16 or 17 years old.

Today she is the plant manager of the Buji Textile Mill, which employs more than 1,280 workers.

The change that took place in eight years may be said to be earthshaking. She used to be an insignificant "third-class" resident; today she is a standout. Eighty percent of the workers under her were once temporary workers like herself.

The story of this successful person is very ordinary. It is nothing more than how a certain person won success under the impetus of a certain motivation and through struggle. At first glance, Zhao Luzhen's success was also nothing more than this.

Some people seek the motivation and the secret of this girl's success.

Did she have more patience than most, or was she better able to show herself to advantage in her work? Was it that her nimble brain was quickly able to adjust to these conditions and this environment? Was it that she triumphed over and changed the environment, or did the environment change and make her?

This is a series of questions.

Ask her and she says, "My family used to be very poor; I longed for change..."

The longing of the impoverished for wealth, and the longing of the humble for high position can be a powerful motivating force.

Formerly, the poverty in rural villages was such that in some cases three sisters took turns wearing the same pair of pants, but they could still snuggle up on the kang and continue living in unbearable boredom.

Once she entered the factory, such a carefree life came to an end. The machinery constantly whirled as though urging you to "hurry up, hurry up." At first, Zhao Luzhen ran around frantically, so busy her eyes blurred, but she was still unable to meet the quotas.

She had no understanding of the theory of how the industrial revolution improved the quality of workers. The first thing she experienced was how machinery tied people down. In a job on an assembly line, you had to struggle to keep up with the operation of a machine, so you too became a machine.

Shouting voices and disgusted looks made Zhao Luzhen not dare to look up. She felt inferior; she felt powerless; she felt shorter than other people; and she swallowed her tears.

Several girls who entered the factory with her and who worked for several days but could not stand this confining life told Zhao Luzhen, "Let's go back. We don't want to bear blame from foreigners here. Although we are poor there, we can try to be carefree."

Zhao Luzhen shook her head. Although it was tough here, there might be some other way of coping. If she returned to the village to farm the land, it might be like that for the rest of her life. Zhao Luzhen had a dream in her heart...

People live according to their goals. Zhao Luzhen was not the kind of woman who forever dealt passively with life. She was also weak, but she was unwilling to be mediocre. Women with such a personality can stand out from the common run of people.

She stayed on, gradually adjusting to the harsh environment. Not only did it require an adjustment in her physical strength and stamina, but a change in her personality and temperament as well.

Half a year later she was promoted to technician.

Another month later, she became the workshop manager.

She realized the counterproductiveness of shouting and disgusted looks, so she learned how to "strictly control" with a kind and pleasant countenance. When a controlled person becomes the "controller" she knows better than most how to control. This is the effect that environment has on one.

Not long afterward, the Hong Kong Gongming Textile Manufacturing Company, Limited opened a textile mill in Buji Town. The town economic development corporation transferred her there as deputy manager. Subsequently, she became the mill manager.

She was able to deal on an equal footing with the Hong Kong firm that issued orders to her.

Wasn't this her dream come true?

Every field requires a model. As something new that had emerged out of labor market reform, Shenzhen's 300,000 temporary workers also needed a model. Thus, Zhao Luzhen became that model.

"Outstanding Communist Youth League member," "outstanding party member," "March 8th [International Working Women's Day] red-banner pacesetter," "outstanding young factory manager"—laurel after laurel was placed on her head. She was recommended to leaders at every level and became the pride of the 300,000 temporary workers elsewhere in Shenzhen.

She was not without critics, however. Some women said she had changed, had become cunning, was deceitful, had become insensitive, and was not feminine. Possibly this stemmed from prejudice, or possibly from a difference in perceptions.

At 25 or 26, one is a fully grown man or woman, but she had not yet found a male friend. She had her own sadness. Do not suppose that it is easy at the top.

But no matter her vexations, after all is said and done, she was a lucky one. But as far as the temporary workers at Shenzhen are concerned, an overwhelming majority had not freed themselves from the bewilderment that accompanied their excitement, the loss that accompanied their expectations, and the unfamiliarity that accompanied their sense of newness. The environment was forcing them to change everything about themselves, and they were also shaping themselves to adapt to everything. For them, these changes and adaptations were tantamount to recreating a persona.

This was a "social community" in need of remolding, but history had not created the opportunity for them. They came from the impoverished land to be thrown at once into machine labor where they became machines. Looked at from this angle, you will be able to understand why the "successful ones" among them were few and far between.

Those who were unreconciled to mediocrity relied on their own efforts to create opportunities to improve themselves and transform themselves, but this was a hard road.

Chapter III

High Price To Pay

UNESCO statistics show that one of every four illiterates in the world today is Chinese.

These figures evoke anxiety and disquiet from the descendants of an ancient cultural tradition. Moreover, that the speed at which China is creating "new illiterates" is also accelerating also forms a marked contrast with mankind's creation of a new century of civilization.

According to survey data provided by national departments concerned, approximately 2 million "new illiterates" are produced in China each year. Virtually all these "new illiterates" are dropouts from primary and middle school.

On 29 December 1988, the Chinese Communist Youth League Central Committee issued a warning to the country: In 1988, 7.39 million primary and middle school students dropped out of school throughout the country, a dropout rate of nine percent. This was a marked rise in the dropout rate as compared with 1986 and 1987.

In a series of newspaper reports, the Chinese QING-NIAN BAO tracked down and reported on this worrisome "dangerous school-dropout group."

Where have all these children in need of cultural nurturing left for?

The channels are complex and the routes varied.

In Shenzhen I discovered a "dropout group."

Negotiations Between Guangdong and Guangxi

In March 1989, the Guangxi Yulin Prefecture CPC Committee office sent a dispatch to the Chinese Communist Central Committee office in Beijing reporting that various enterprises in Guangdong Province were unlawfully recruiting primary and middle school students in Yulin Prefecture as child labor.

The report said that, since the lunar new year, large numbers of people from Shenzhen and Dongguan in Guangdong Province had been coming steadily to all the counties and cities in Yulin Prefecture, Guangxi Province, to recruit child labor. They had already recruited more than 1,000 primary and middle school students, 556 of them middle school students, and 468 primary school students. These students ranged in age from 10 to 15 or 16. In Beiliu County, 2,345 primary and middle school students have dropped out of school and do not want to go back to classes. Heads of household and teachers in Yulin Prefecture have reacted strongly to this, demanding that these children be saved.

After receiving the document that the CPC Central Committee office forwarded, the Guangdong Provincial CPC Committee immediately ordered an "immediate investigation, reporting the circumstances to us."

However, some people are not convinced: "Is the problem as serious as Guangxi says?"

"Why have we not seen any child labor?"

On 26 April, the Guangdong Provincial Labor Service Company, the provincial Environmental Protection Office, and the Shenzhen Municipal Labor Bureau, Environmental Protection Office, Trade Union, and Women's Federation organized an investigation team to go to the Luohu district, the Nantou district, and Baoan County, where are located a fairly large number of enterprises that do "three forms of import processing and compensation trade" to investigate the child labor problem. The results were startling.

Forty-four of 206 enterprises investigated employed child labor. In some enterprises, the hiring of child labor was extremely serious, more than 100 being employed.

The Baoli Electronics Factory at Longgang in Baoan County, which had 238 workers, had hired 230 from Yulin City in Guangxi Province in 1986, 89 of them child laborers. This was 40 percent of the total number of workers in the factory.

The Guangde Pearl Jewelry Processing Plant at Zhuguang Village in the Nantou district hired 150 temporary workers from Rongxian County in Yulin Prefecture, Guangxi. Even the investigation team could not figure out how many of them were child laborers below the legal age. Their registration forms gave their age as 17 or more, but when you asked them their age, they insisted they were 16; but, according to the investigation team's observations, the girls were 14 or 15 years old at most.

The Ruihe Umbrella Factory in Nanlian Village, Longgang, Baoan County, hired more than 20 child laborers, the youngest of whom were third-year primary school students only 13 years old.

The members of the investigation team were shocked. They are still children, but in those extremely noisy workshops they seem like adults working with all their might. Their faces have prematurely lost the innocence and romance that they should not have lost. Their hearts have been prematurely burdened with cares that should come later in life. Although they have created high profits for foreign businessmen and for Shenzhen, our motherland has paid a high price.

Child labor is extremely cheap. They draw their minuscule wages in one or two childlike hands. Some of them are not even able to write their names well; they have to press a small, eye-assaulting red fingerprint on their wage cards...

They are China's future. Just what can they do for China's future?

We liberated the people for the republic, and we were proud to get rid of rapacious and inhumane child labor. But what kind of explanation are we to make to history for the emergence of this new generation of child labor?

Hong Kong traders take exception to this. One old boss said the following to me, "Actually, they won't miss those few years. Working here is more comfortable than farming at home, and they can earn some money as well."

Although worried, the Chinese consider the problem from another angle. The Chinese manager of a certain electronics factory in Pinghu said, "It is because we pity these children that we hire them to work in the factory. Imagine that if I did not let them come, these girls might very possibly do other things in society in violation of the law and discipline."

Just what will be the fate of these child laborers in some enterprises? Actually, it is all too apparent.

Life Without Sunshine

Well-informed people tell me that of all the 300,000 temporary workers in Shenzhen, the ones with the saddest fate are the girls in sole proprietorships or joint ventures.

Before I visited Shenzhen, I had heard about their predicament and hard lot in life, but I did not pay attention. On this visit to Shenzhen, I tried to conduct interviews several times, but without success. The Hong Kong businessmen and foremen were very much on the alert against outsiders entering the plants, and they sought to keep news correspondents as far away as possible.

Five minutes after the bell to begin work sounded, the factory's heavy gate clanged shut, leaving a white-painted signboard hanging from the iron gate which read: No guests permitted during work hours.

The female temporary workers usually work 14 or 15 hours a day, and after they return to their dormitory, they are looked after by a "caretaker," so it is very difficult to see the female temporary workers' actual work environment or living environment in order to understand their actual circumstances.

One day I entered a Hong Kong businessman sole proprietorship dinnerware processing plant through a crumbling courtyard wall, but no sooner had I entered the workshop than I suddenly heard a strange voice call out behind me. A short man of about 40, club in hand, intercepted me. He shouted at me in Canton dialect, none of which I understood. His voice was terrifying.

Unable to talk to each other, and unable to make myself understood, I rapidly beat a retreat via the way I had come.

This was the first place in the course of my newspaper coverage that I had ever encountered a correspondent being "received" with a club.

I was rebuffed many times, but I did not give up. I sought out a new friend, a reporter for SHENZHEN FAZHI BAO [SHENZHEN LEGAL SYSTEM NEWS] named Jiang Yuan [1203 3293]. He sought out a policeman from a local police station and, under "protection" of a uniformed policeman, we went to the Sixing Manufacturing Plant's women's dormitory in the Nantou district of Shenzhen.

I pushed open the rotting, swaying, and creaking wooden door. This was a work shed that had been converted from a tumbledown plant building with high ceilings heavy with cobwebs. For want of repairs for a long time, wide cracks had formed in the building's four pillars through which one could clearly see the dusty road outside.

The room was very dark, with only two air hole-like "windows" very high up. Coming in from the outside, it was difficult for one's eyes to adjust. I smelled a revolting acidic stench.

In the middle of the room was a not very wide passageway on both sides of which double-decker bunk beds with planks had been nailed together. There was no "bed space" here. Mosquito nets, whose original color was no

longer distinguishable, hung from poles. In some places, three people were crammed into a space for sleeping two.

Unless you saw it with your own eyes, you positively would not believe it. How did these girls have to contract their own bodies in order to be able to sleep in this wretched space?

The room had three women worker occupants at the time. The girl named Yang, who came from Wuhua County in Guangdong, told me that the "Sixing Manufacturing Plant produced mostly Chinese paintings on silk, that almost all the workers were female, and the youngest one was only 12."

Another one named Huang came from Guangxi. She said she was 16 years old this year.

Her hand had been burned by the silk painting press and was just healing. She extended her left hand, on the back of which was a two-inch-long purplish-black butterfly-shaped burn mark. The protruding blood vessels in the swollen and almost transparent scar could be seen very clearly. The Huang girl, with a wan and sallow face, whispered to me that her hand had been burned 20 days earlier.

"On the evening before I burned my hand, I had worked until 2230 before going off duty. When I returned to the dormitory, my head felt so dizzy and swollen that I could not sleep. I went to work at 0700 the following morning still feeling dazed. Each day we have to press several thousand paintings, and we work for 15 or 16 hours." The Huang girl leaned against the ladder to the unevenly nailed upper bunk that had been daubed with black paint as she told of her misfortune.

"I placed sheet after sheet of raw material in the bottom of the flower-leaf mold, and then I turned on the switch. The nearly 100-degree [Celsius] high-temperature iron then pressed down... I was doing this over and over when, suddenly, I saw a flash before my eyes, and I became dizzy, and I could not control my hands or legs. I had not completely withdrawn the hand that I had used to put in the flower leaves, and the iron pressed it down firmly, emitting a puff of white smoke with a sizzle. I screamed with pain and passed out..."

"When I regained consciousness, the foreman would not permit me to go to the hospital. They bandaged it up with a piece of white gauze, and said that it would soon be well. But after two days the wound became infected with pus, and swelled up terribly. Only then did the boss give me 5 yuan to go to the hospital."

"Why didn't you go back home?" I asked.

"Go back home?" Her eye sockets suddenly reddened, and she said chokingly, "Go back home with what? I have no money!"

"Haven't you been working for three months already?" I said with astonishment.

"I only make 110 yuan a month, and I have to pay for food, a place to live, and electricity. Payments here and payments there, and only a small amount remains. I also have to buy soap, toilet paper, and things like that each month. So what money do I have left? Furthermore, if you want to stop working, you have to pay a training fee and a permit-processing fee to the factory. After my hand was burned, they only issued me a food card; not money."

"All I can say is that I must ask my mama and daddy to forgive me for not being able to earn the money to return home!" Miss Huang's two swollen eyes were unable to hold back the tears of sadness any longer, and they rolled down her cheeks.

I was sad for a long while.

Looking outside through the crack in the opposite wall, I could see the imposing statue of the god of fortune that the Hong Kong boss had erected beside the road at the entrance to the workshop. On an altar, incense burned continuously, and bananas, apples, and high-quality sweets were laid out on a table.

"Doesn't the municipal government have a rule that temporary workers' wages may be no lower than 150 yuan a month? Why don't you go to the Labor Bureau to appeal for help?"

"Where would we baby girls go to find the Labor Bureau? With me hurt this way, it's too much; it isn't worth it. Who would take our side? Who knows how much the boss earns? He signed a contract with the village, and every year he pays a management fee and a land-use fee. Every year the village comes to receive some money. It doesn't care about anything else..."

A female worker lying on a bed was feverish. She seemed to be 13 or 14 years old at most. Her face was ashen, and she was clearly not doing well. I went over, thinking of talking talk with her a little, but she paid no attention to me. Later, she simply got down from the bed and left. Her legs were extremely bowed, and her body was alarmingly thin.

These girls, who knew so little of the ways of the world, and who still do not comprehend the love that their mothers gave them, have begun to realize the sadness that life gave them. Some of them did not even understand what it is to be female before they were plunged into this life of hardships.

A comrade in the Women's Federation told me the following story.

A female child laborer who was just beginning to menstruate discovered blood flowing from her private parts, so she grabbed a piece of cloth used for packaging and went to the toilet to wipe herself. But no matter how much she wiped, she could not wipe herself clean.

She felt overwhelming dread, and did not understand what this was all about. She felt ashamed, so she did not dare tell anyone else about it. So she put up with it...

The "woman foreman" in charge of the shift noticed that this girl was always running to the toilet, so she quietly followed her and suddenly opened the door. There she saw that the girl's underpants and pants were covered with blood, and that she was still wiping...

Possibly I should not tell such heart-rending stories about child labor that I saw and heard in Shenzhen, thereby making people feel disgusted with yet another aspect of Shenzhen society. Society and history always develop through an alternating process of light and darkness, advance and retreat, civilization and barbarism. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of child labor, this inhumane and barbaric "experience" created in the pursuit of high profits in the primitive capitalist accumulation process is not inevitable in the course of reform and opening to the outside world.

As Chinese, we must uncomplainingly pay the price for the historical detours that we ourselves have taken, and put up with suffering. But we must avoid having a new generation in the republic also bear this suffering. We must not allow a shadow to be cast on the future as well.

The child labor phenomenon is by no means an isolated issue. It is a social problem. It is not that our organizations at all levels have not recognized this problem.

The principal leaders in the CPC Central Committee and the State Council have several times given instruction on the need for a resolute halt to the tendency of enterprises to hire child labor, and to let the children return to school to study...

On 5 November, the Ministry of Labor, the State Education Commission, the Ministry of Agriculture, the State Industry and Commerce Bureau, and the National Federation of Trade Unions jointly issued a special and solemn "Notice on Prohibition of the Use of Child Labor." Such an action was the first in the history of New China. The notice said that when injury or death, or serious circumstances result from the employment of child labor, the offenders are to be punished according to the law.

The Chinese Youth League Central Committee issued an accompanying notice calling on the league organization at all levels to halt the "dropping out" of primary and middle school students.

However, despite numerous injunctions, child labor has not been abolished; instead it is tending to become worse and worse.

A whole series of laws and regulations for the protection of the physical and mental health of youth, such as the "Compulsory Education Law" and "Temporary Regulations for Enterprises Hiring of Workers," as well as the "Youth Protection Law," that some provinces and cities

have inaugurated are by no means lacking, but just where do these laws and regulations fail in their effectiveness?

Ineffectual Laws and Regulations

Just how many child laborers are there spread throughout the more than 10,000 "three kinds of partially or wholly foreign-owned" enterprises in the city and countryside around Shenzhen? This is probably a number that would be difficult to arrive at.

We drove to places like Baon and Huizhong together with cadres from the Shenzhen Municipal Education Commission and the Labor Department to make calls and conduct investigations in an effort to understand the child labor situation. But all the enterprises to which we went opened up their worker registration books to let us review them carefully. This was not worth the trouble. Superficially, there was no trace of the employment of child labor; consequently, you could not easily refute their flat denial.

Later, when we arrived at the Pingshan Town Development Corporation, the leaders there explained the mystery.

They told us that you will never fine a child laborer by going over the ages one by one on the workers' registration forms. This is because the age of many child laborers is false. No real evidence can be found from such checks, particularly for the recent period when units at all levels have been investigating very closely the child labor issue and punishing offenders severely when found. Consequently, both the child laborers and the enterprises alike have become more ingenious in their means of warding off these investigations.

In the child-labor hiring process, "labor contractors" and "dealers in human beings" play key roles.

We visited a detained "labor contractor" at the Public Security Bureau detention center.

This "labor contractor" came from Meixian in Guangdong Province. His name was Wang, and he was just 24 years old. He had been working as a "labor contractor" for about five years. No fewer than 100-odd child laborers had passed through his hands on their way to Shenzhen, Dongguan, and Foshan.

He said, "Mostly I worked out of Shenzhen to provide temporary workers. This was because Shenzhen has the most enterprises processing materials brought into the country from elsewhere, and many of them require hand processing such as classical Chinese painting on silk, handbags, and electronic components. The bosses in these enterprises, both Chinese and those from elsewhere, like to employ young, obedient, female workers because they can pay them one-third less than they pay adults."

"When you recruited labor, did anyone go with you?"

"Usually I would try to find out which enterprises needed which kinds of people, and then I would make contact with them, write a letter of introduction to them, and then recruit them. Sometimes we also carried letters of introduction and an official seal when recruiting labor.

"Where did you get the letters of introduction and the official seals?"

"This can be very easily arranged in Shenzhen. If you are willing to spend money, you yourself can run a company for introducing people to any kind of work."

"Don't you know that hiring child labor is illegal?"

He seemed a little flustered, and stammered, "This... this is not my affair!"

"I went to very poor mountain areas to recruit labor, and I said clearly that I did not want people under 17, but when they registered, they all said they were 17. So I also wrote down 17 years old."

"Labor contractors" earn a lot of money. They can get a double fee, one from the person being introduced and another from the enterprise. So, in order to make money, they may forge everything. They can bring one batch after another of girls under 17 into Shenzhen. Some of them have solid relations with various government departments who handle border area permits and provide temporary residence certificate letters. Some labor contractors also practice deception, stealthily substituting one identity for another. They might substitute one person's age, name, and place of birth for another. The reason some enterprises are unable to find the intended recipients of telegrams and letters is that their real identities have been concealed and a false report made, making it difficult to find them.

Such falsification is not just a scam used by profit-hungry "labor contractors." Some grassroots-level cadres openly or secretly also use the same underhanded method. A survey shows that, in some rural villages of Guangxi Province, village CPC Committee cadres who knew very well that girls going elsewhere to work were not of the legal age certified that they were 17 when filling out certificates in order to make money and derive material benefits. They then collected a certification fee of 75 yuan for each one.

The bright-red great seals used by township governments are used imposingly to dupe and deceive our laws and regulations.

Thus, it is not difficult to understand why child labor has not been halted despite repeated injunctions, but rather is becoming worse and worse. Can a "Compulsory Education Law" and the superficial repeated injunctions of a few government departments stop this "tide of child labor" that ripples from top to bottom and from left to right making it difficult to separate truth and falsehood?

The lack of labor-control system regulations and laws created this mess, and this mess provides a "hot bed" for the rise and development of child labor.

Some people say worriedly that, "unless it is effectively restricted, rural township and town 'three forms of import processing and compensation trade' enterprises in Shenzhen may end up as a child labor world."

Actually, the saddening thing is not just that our labor control system is in a mess; even more saddening are the child laborers themselves.

Very many of the primary and middle school students go to work of their own free will. They feel that studying is useless; it is better to do a little work to earn a little money for real benefits. In addition, rural education fees are also high. Families find it hard to pay them, so they cannot have their children continue to study. All they can do is take the work route.

It seems that, under the current circumstances, our "Compulsory Education Law" should not only make people realize that education is compulsory, but must also ensure that they are able to be educated.

At the Ruihe Umbrella Factory in Longgang Town, we saw a group of baby-faced young girls who, when asked their age, replied with unconcern, "I am 13 this year."

Her father was a guard at this factory.

We asked her father why he let his daughter go to work when she was so small and still growing. Why didn't he let her study?

He said nothing for a long time, and then it took him a long time to get out a single sentence:

"What use is studying? Studying more is not so important!"

What could we say when faced with a child laborer who knew nothing of the world and the future, and when faced with such a father?

Advising, guiding, talking about the future of the motherland, and talking about life's concerns cannot compare with realistically enlightening them.

Phrase-mongering like "save the children" seems of no avail. The important thing to do is change realities.

Chapter IV

The Lost Sex

When we got back from our visit, it was already late at night. A dead silence surrounded me as I walked slowly toward the hostel. Not far away in the dazzling "starry" place that I had just left were the lights of the Sihai dormitory, a female temporary workers' dormitory in

the Shekou industrial district of Shenzhen. This is possibly the most concentrated location of unmarried women in China. More than 7,000 temporary female workers live here.

That women suffer more than men is a keenly felt sense that I acquired during my visit to Shenzhen. Women have to bear not only the suffering that all people bear, but they also have to bear sexual suffering. This is a double suffering that men usually do not understand.

We hear a lot about the "emancipation" of Chinese women. However, there is nothing more startling and incomprehensible than the report from the "Sixth Congress of the World Productivity Scientific Alliance" held at Montreal in Canada during September 1988.

China holds 132d place among the countries of the world in the position of women.

The report said that there was not a single female member in the Chinese delegation at the congress. Quiz-zically, we sought verification from the congress secretariat.

The congress secretariat verified this report, and also provided this female scholar with six guidelines for judging the position of women.

Females are really a mystery. Not only do they symbolize a country's civilization and a society's progress today, but they have assumed roles that philosophers, historians, sociologists, and writers are at great pains to confirm. Actually, such actions are not amiss, because only by truly confirming the female sex is it possible to truly confirm this "world."

Nevertheless, truly understanding women is very difficult. A woman's world is more complex than a man's world.

Therefore, I want to tell their story.

The Puzzle of Sexual Imbalance

A plastic handbag-processing enterprise in Baon County, Shenzhen, employs 205 temporary workers. The ratio of female to male workers is 50 to one; only four are male.

A weaving mill in the same county is uniformly a "female kingdom" in which the plant manager is a woman, the workshop managers are women, the workers are women, the technical personnel are women, and even the guards are women.

Some people suppose that the nature of the work done in the Shenzhen processing zone dictates the sex of the workers. But there is no lack of other reasons as well. A Hong Kong businessman in a dinnerware manufacturing plant in the Nantou district of Shenzhen said the following: "Of course, both males and females are suitable for the work we do here, but I prefer female workers."

They are more obedient and easier to manage than males, and they don't form gangs or like to cause trouble..."

Whether intentionally or unintentionally, he revealed an important reason. Using society's conventional value yardstick, female labor is usually cheaper than male labor.

The 250,000 young women congregated on this "sliver of land" at Shenzhen not only turn out commodities, but also produce a "by-product," namely "sexual restlessness" that no one can stifle.

Historically, there has been a proportional imbalance between the two sexes in the Shenzhen processing zone. The "special area" in which there is a high concentration of people of the same sex is dazzling, but it is also an area about which people feel quite helpless.

Analyzing mankind from the biological standpoint, sociologists believe that sexual balance between the two sexes is a major factor in stabilizing both society and people. However, when the two sexes are seriously out of balance, this may create psychological and emotional imbalances leading to a "slope effect" in moods or even creating social disorder. This is scientific, and it is also a law of human society. These laws seemed hard to violate and hard to defy both in certain areas in certain historical processes of capitalist society and in certain areas in certain historical advances of socialist society.

When operating export processing areas in Singapore, the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan, managers felt that compliant women were most amenable to control, and that they were the optimum choice of labor for the creation of high profits. In addition, the nature of the work in the processing areas also dictated their choice, so young women became highly concentrated in these areas. They never imagined that the proportional imbalance might create a sexual sublimation problem among the temporary female workers that would ultimately directly impair labor productivity rates and cause them to be at a loss as to what to do.

After surveying several large export-processing zones in the Asian-Pacific region, the famous Japanese economist Fujisawa Koji said flatly that "solving the female worker sexual sublimation problem in intensive labor-processing zones is vastly more difficult than solving conflicts and disputes between labor and capital."

Because of the serious proportional imbalance between the sexes, and even more so because of numerous difficult-to-solve social problems, the sexual sublimation problem among female temporary workers is bound to occur in Shenzhen. Despondency about love, sexual yearning, plaintiveness, and restless feelings, prostitution, involvements, lesbianism, the ever-increasing cohabitation, and pregnancies before marriage cause organizations and leaders vexations that they do not know how to handle. Although the problems are not all that serious in Shenzhen as yet since it has not been a

processing area for very long, the speed and trend of development of "side effects" have already caused concern. Unless society becomes seriously concerned, within several years these problems will very likely form a "hard knot" that will be difficult to untie.

Sexual problems are mysterious and difficult to explain for the Chinese. When these problems are connected to economic and social factors, they become more complex, and the use of morale concepts alone seems unlikely to be able to solve and explain the sublimation problems of Shenzhen temporary female workers.

Our traditional fixed ideas and traditional moral concepts are facing a challenge.

The Love Blues

Here stands a dormitory in which 14 temporary female workers live. A single story high and facing the water, it is not very large and it is somewhat dank and dreary. Nevertheless, the atmosphere in this narrow space for the women is by no means dull. There is a riot of color everywhere. At the head of or on the walls alongside both the upper and lower level bunks hang a string of photographs of "male stars" taken from heaven know where. There are not many "female stars" among them, but there is a galaxy of "male stars." There are photographs of the Chinese Yang Zaibao [2799 0961 5508] and Da Shichang [6671 1709 1603], the Japanese Takashi Kuraken and Miura Tomomasa, the Americans Alain Delong and Michael J. Fox, as well as some physical fitness stars I never heard of such as the Austrian-born Arnold Schwarzenegger and the Hollywood acting star Harrison Ford.

A girl joked to Young Sun from Guangxi in the bunk below that she was a real "male star" fan. The proof was that as soon as the U.S. television play, *Target*, was broadcast by the central television station, Young Sun clipped a photograph of the hero, American movie and television star Matt Dillon, from ZHONGWAI DIANSHI YUEKAN [CHINESE-FOREIGN TELEVISION MONTHLY], which she bought at a high price.

Young Sun's face turned crimson at once, and she grabbed the towel that covered her pillow in embarrassment, and hit the bed with it.

The photograph of Matt Dillon attached to the wall at the head of the bunk was done in a very fancy style. One side of his face was in shadow, and the background was a rosy hue as though from a neon light shining in the dark night. One corner of his mouth was slack, and from it a cigarette dangled raffishly. From behind wreathes of smoke, a pair of drowsy eyes looked out. He had a lot of sex appeal, but he was no "softie." His forehead showed male "roughness."

During an age when all sorts of stars have "exploded," star worship is a very natural thing, but that the 10-odd temporary female workers in this fairly representative

living space have 23 "male stars" (albeit photographs) cannot but make one feel that this is an expression of a yearning in their hearts.

The more distant an idol, the more wonderful he seems, and the more unapproachable a male, the more everything about him seems mysterious.

In the toy factory where they work, the ratio of females to males is 12 to one and in some workshops virtually everyone is female. A woman's world without men is likewise dull and lonely.

A newspaper in the Shekou industrial district of Shenzhen published a temporary female worker's letter. Was this letter strikingly "plaintive, repentant, or hopeful"? The headlined letter aroused a strong reaction in the Shekou industrial district.

This was a true bearing of the emotional restlessness of an adolescent girl whose loneliness, blues, bereft feelings, and the emptiness of the female psychological world strongly shocked people.

"We even forget our existence as women. Only the 'official routine' each month reminds us that we are still women..."

The leaders of the Shekou industrial district were shocked. They sensed that such loneliness and anxious restlessness could generate side effects.

The industrial district trade union, Young Communist League CPC Committee, and the Women's Federation immediately took action to build with miraculous speed a workers club, dance hall, ball court, and roller-skating rink in the Sihai industrial district.

The ear-splitting "disco" music, the rotating strobe lights, and the new games and entertainment washed away and counteracted for a time the temporary female workers' loneliness and bereft feelings. Their empty world was filled with this sudden outpouring of joy.

However, this artificial "filling" proved temporary. The stimulation and improvement of morale could scarcely regulate people's psychology and biology. After they wiped away the beads of sweat from the dance hall and the roller-skating rink and burrowed back under the narrow mosquito net of their "own world," when they looked into a small mirror and saw the red color and the rosy dawn of their youth gradually fading, their hearts experienced a spontaneous sense of dread and feeling of loss.

They could not escape the realities of life, the realities of biology, and the realities of marriage, yet it was hard for them to transcend these realities. Thus, a new sense of emptiness and loss enveloped them...

The reason was seemingly very simple. The crux of some 27- and 28-year-old girls' problem in being unable to love and marry was their lack of permanent residence registration. Only when they had a permanent residence

registration could they become real residents of Shenzhen or Shekou. They had to have a permanent household registration in order to enjoy housing, gas, water, and electricity subsidies. Only if they had a permanent household registration could their children attend nurseries, kindergartens, or even go to school...

Lack of a permanent household registration was an obstacle to the development of human emotions. You have to admit this. Even though it may be just a small card "lying" in a filing cabinet at the police station, its "magic" is mighty.

Some girls worked with all their might, skimped on eating, and were very thrifty in order to get enough money together to ask someone to send a gift to "buy" a household registration so they would finally have a "resting place" for their feelings.

The black-market price of a permanent household registration also seemed to have risen in Shenzhen and Shekou.

Not everyone can demolish traditional things, and real reason always grates cruelly on feelings, creating tragedy for fate.

A SHENZHEN TEQU BAO correspondent received the following letter from a female temporary worker:

"...I am writing this letter before I go to have an induced abortion. I love him, and he loves me. We are taking this road because here is no way out. Because I am a temporary worker without a formal household registration, I cannot formally marry. He doesn't want this, and I do not want this either. I have been in Shekou for four years, and I have also hoped for a permanent household registration for four years. I am now 25 years old. I have contributed my youth to Shekou, so shouldn't Shekou solve my permanent household registration problem?"

"There are more than just me in the Sihai dormitory area who have the same fate as I. I hope that you correspondents will come to take a look and make an appeal on our behalf so there will be no further tragedies..."

A permanent household registration is an "evil card" that limits people. I asked at the Shenzhen Municipal General Federation of Trade Unions as to why it is so difficult to provide permanent household registration for temporary workers who have worked for a long time.

A comrade in the women's work department told me that it is more than a permanent household registration card; it is a very important burden. Once a person becomes a permanent resident, a whole series of problems have to be solved for the resident, such as housing, welfare, children. The cost of a permanent registration card all adds up to 100,000 yuan.

This is what the permanent household registration concept connotes.

So for 300,000 temporary workers? Holy smokes! The figure is simply astounding!

So, only by sacrificing the youth and happiness of these people can the current status of Shenzhen be maintained.

Is the system whereby female workers rotate really suited to Shenzhen? This makes people think deeply.

Not to have a permanent household registration is sad, but to separate permanent household registration from welfare services in state-owned enterprises would make people feel even sadder, because people desire more than just a "paper card."

Reality that grates on people is sad, but to change reality is also sad. This is the reality of sadness.

What Is Not Permitted To Be Done, and What Cannot Be Done

One cannot say that trade unions, and women's federation organizations in Shenzhen do not grieve for these female temporary workers from elsewhere.

The Women's Federation printed a small pamphlet for "four self" education, which held up people like Zhao Luzhen, who gave up love and marriage, as a progressive model.

Some people feel that sexual problems are related to crime, and that for women to talk about sexual problems is simply degenerate. Much education and help has been given the temporary workers on these problems, but results have not amounted to much.

The older women in the Women's Federation know that there is another training ground in Shenzhen, and that is the special program that a Hong Kong television station broadcasts at midnight every Friday titled *Ask Dr. Ha—Questions and Answers to Young People's Sexual Questions*.

This program can be seen any place in Shenzhen, and in very many enterprises where conditions are fairly good the women would rather stay up to see this program than sleep. This is a serialized program in which an American medical doctor answers live questions from American youth on sexual matters. This doctor, who is along in years, acts as a "granny" for the young people. Furthermore, the sponsors of this fascinating program that is so humorous that it makes people roar with laughter have made his special topic very exciting. It is extraordinarily fascinating, and much enjoyed by young people. It has become the top viewer-rated program of this television station.

Reportedly these programs had the effect of frightening people when the idea was first proposed and the first program was broadcast. Such a penetrating, explicit, and completely revealing discussion with youth about the most secret sexual problems between males and females, some of which are problems that people can scarcely bring themselves to mention, takes courage not only on

the part of the young men and women on the program who ask the questions, but on the part of the doctor who answers the questions as well.

Sexual problems and sex education are a scientific discipline in more open territories and countries, but in closed and conservative places that are close-mouthed about people's sexual problems, they become lewd. This program is banned in some units in Shenzhen, particularly in some state-owned enterprises. Nevertheless, sexual problems and human development do exist at the same time and are difficult to proscribe. The more they are banned, the less they are halted.

"The truth is who doesn't think about making love?" One day, I was talking with several somewhat older female temporary workers who were not as shy as some young maidens: "After working hard all day long, who doesn't like to lie up against a man's chest and rest a little? I'm not joking. Even if we cannot marry him, we would still like to do that."

Such talk might make conservatives stare and become tongue-tied.

An expert in the Shenzhen Municipal Public Security Bureau who is fairly knowledgeable about the sexual psychology of young people said that "such a psychology is normal and is consistent with the laws of human biology. No one can prevent these girls from thinking about sex problems. It is as though their minds were stacked with tinder. When the flame of sexual desire touches it, it is bound to blaze..."

This creates a situation in which they are not permitted to think about such things and do such things, and in which they are prevented from doing such things by the lack of a permanent household registration and no home. However, people's desire for love and sex is so strong that it cannot be quenched by lack of permission and restrictions. Consequently, the number of female temporary workers in Shenzhen who are living with men has increased, and the number of pregnancies out of wedlock has also increased.

It is very difficult to compile statistics on the number of such cases, but a correspondent from SHENZHEN TEQU BAO did a hard but thankless task that was very enlightening for those engaged in ideological educational work. He gathered statistics from many enterprises in the Shekou industrial district on women who became pregnant before marriage. These statistics showed a year-by-year trend of increase in the number of premarital pregnancies.

The Shekou industrial district has approximately 10,000 female temporary workers of whom more than 200 became pregnant before marriage in 1984; more than 300 in 1985; and more than 800 in 1987.

And what are the figures for the number of unmarried people who are living together?

Faced with this reality, some of our workers at the grassroots level can no longer scrupulously abide by the spirit of instructions on education and guidance from high-level leaders: "We have to face realities," said a young cadre who did not want her name disclosed.

"All we can do is issue more birth control devices, but we hope that these women will not 'make love' promiscuously and damage their own bodies simply because they have them."

Out of a sense of the seriousness of the situation, the Shekou district trade union operated a "reception room for staff member and worker inquiries" in the Sihai female temporary workers' dormitory in an effort to help the female temporary workers solve some ideological problems. A number of hardworking and responsible trade union cadres, such as Xie Guanxiong [6200 0385 7160] and Jiang Mingqing [5592 2429 3237], worked during the daytime and were on duty in the reception room during the evening to have heart-to-heart talks with female workers who came to see them. They acted as parents to the women, guiding them along and urging them, and they also treated them like friends, helping them analyze the advantages and disadvantages of situations and guiding them to a way out. Nevertheless, after all was said and done, they found results were miniscule.

For many years we have supposed ideological education to be omnipotent. No matter the situation, it seemed that so long as ideological education was given, all troubles and conflict would naturally disappear, and all would be smooth sailing. Ideological education became our unchanging strategy for meeting countless changing situations. However, it was found with these temporary female workers that very many real problems cannot be solved by relying on political and ideological work. The world is complex; life is complex, and people are complex. One cannot explain everything with transcendental laws. Education can only give impetus to change; it cannot determine everything.

They told me a story of a female temporary worker who became pregnant before marriage.

This girl came from Shaoguan. She and a lad from Shenzhen maintained a sexual relationship for a fairly long time, which was discovered after she became pregnant and had an abortion.

They told her, "You should have told us frankly. Just what kind of man is he? Was he toying with your affections? The first time you had sex, were you forced? It is very important for you to tell us on this point."

All of a sudden, her wan face flushed. "No. I was not forced; I really was not. I wanted to do it..."

It was a passion-arousing spring night, and they were embracing each other on the green grass...

"Although I will have to leave Shekou, go back to my native village, and leave him, I feel no regret. Although I

gave him my most precious all, I am lucky compared with many people. I got all I hoped for."

Just what kind of a judgment should be made of such a woman?

Sublimation is a mysterious and complex area.

When the number of customer orders increased a great deal, the Hong Kong boss of an enterprise in the Shekou industrial district would frequently announce on Monday of each week that on Friday he would invite some handsome young men from nearby factories to a weekend dance. During the week, it seemed the female workers were in especially good spirits, and their labor productivity rate naturally rose. At Dongguan, which is not far from Shenzhen, lived a very famous family that specialized in the growing of lichees. It had more than 200 mu of lichee trees, and it hired more than 20 temporary workers. Unlike many owners of enterprises, the head of this household built his family just a simple house. He allowed employees to have their families with them, and he allowed those who were not married to find their own mates and marry there. In this way, he got more cheap labor for the lichee orchards, and he also maintained rather good continuity among his technical personnel and experienced workers. Not only did his lichee orchards produce a bumper crop each year, but he also had the dependents run a lichee canning factory. His enterprises prospered.

Treating people like people is a prerequisite for the success of any enterprise.

The Dark Night's Reply

The emancipation of women has been a historical theme.

The angry departure of Nora about which Ibsen wrote has been hailed by several generations as "an act by which women gain emancipation," but history does not lightly reach a conclusion on this issue. Instead, countless facts tell us that to leave home does not mean the true emancipation of women. It is only a beginning. Women who leave home may still fall prey to as yet unchanged traditional ideas and conventions.

In a pluralistic society, people both admire the modern and long for the traditional. They think of becoming a person free of all restraints while not wanting to shed their former "self." This is a most tormenting choice.

At that moment, the temporary female worker Lin Lingxiao [2651 3781 4562] was facing such a painful choice.

When she first came to Shenzhen to become a temporary worker, she was just 20 years old. At that time, all she knew was work. Her brain was completely devoid of the ideas that would cause her such extreme pain later on.

As she grew older, one day she suddenly felt that she had become another person. The inner recesses of her mind

seemed to have many more impulses, more passion, and more disquieting feelings than formerly.

In the factory, females greatly outnumbered males, and her workshop and her dormitory was a woman's world. At first, the girls did not know each other, and they were young, so they were very reserved toward each other. Later on, the situation began to change.

They began to learn how to dress up, and they quietly threw their coarse, countrified cotton clothing in the trash can, and went to the used-goods market to buy used "foreign-style clothing." It is hard to say when they began to carry fingernail polish, lipstick, and small mirrors. Though they did not have very much money, they might go out at night to patronize a fascinating dance hall or night club, but they would stand there enviously watching the stylishly dressed men and women going into jam-packed place. The fascinating and hallucinating neon lights, and the graceful and arousing light music intoxicated them and made them linger on, forgetting to return to their dormitories.

Their temperament seemed to become "open" in their difficult-to-endure environment and atmosphere. Where formerly they had been ashamed to talk about sexual matters, and even found it difficult to speak among themselves about their "marital love affairs," now when they got together in larger or smaller numbers, conversation naturally turned to the main theme: men. Perhaps few of them had a real sexual life history to talk about, but the less familiar they were with sex the more mysterious it was, and the more enticing it was for you, for her, and for everyone. The sexual descriptions in novels, the sexual stimulation in popular literature, and the veiled sexual conversations after lights out in the dormitories seemed to fill their physical and emotional void.

Time slipped by and she was five years older. Lingxiao also gradually adapted to this environment, but her first real taste of the experiences they talked about occurred one day in October 1986.

Lingxiao went off duty and left the factory. She found that the young driver of a "Crown" who had been "following" her for the past several days was waiting outside again. Her heart pounded. He was very tall, suave looking, and he was wearing sun-sensor glasses and a "Nike" shirt. He seemed debonair.

Women always pretend they are not the slightest bit interested in men who strike their fancy. Lingxiao arched her eyebrows, ran her hand through her shoulder-length hair, and, looking neither to right nor left, she passed him casually. He looked like a southerner with his light complexion, fine features, and his pair of not-very-large but heart-melting eyes beneath two fine eyebrows. She was a seductive woman.

"Miss, please wait..." He came up from behind her. "Can I take you where you're going?"

Just now, as soon as she had passed him and the "Crown" automobile, Lingxiao immediately wished she had done otherwise. She knew that very many girls took the initiative in pursuing men, but she hadn't taken an opportunity when it came her way. Now that opportunity "favored her," why was she waiting? She was shy, but she also could not hold herself back from getting into his "Crown."

Although she was a novice in sexual matters, the sexual yearning and repression that she had long experienced caused her passion and excitement to reach a high pitch...

For a while they were completely caught up in this high peak of physical experience, so they were harmonious and happy.

It was not long, however, before Lin Lingxiao found that he came to see her less and less frequently, and each time they met, the excitement and enthusiasm became less and less. What caused her the greatest shock and pain was when she found that the automobile she would always remember was frequently parked at a factory gate where other temporary female workers congregated.

Although Lin Lingxiao was excited by and yearned for love and sex, she was by no means a promiscuous woman. When she fully gave their body to him and lay in his arms dreaming, Lingxiao fashioned a wonderful future for herself...

She would marry him and have a fat baby for him. He would drive a taxi during the day, and in the evening she would make a good meal for him. He was kissing her forehead and tenderly holding her. She was on a bed of "dreams" as soft and fluffy as cotton...

She lacked a permanent household registration, but she believed in her own eyes and feelings. She was a senior middle school graduate, and she could work wonders. Other people were extremely envious and jealous of her.

But her dreams were smashed to smithereens by reality. After she satisfied him once again, she said:

"I have given you everything. I have been pregnant twice and had an abortion twice for you. Is it that you just want to go on delaying? Just what do you intend to do?"

"What do you mean, 'intend to do'?" He moved her hand from his naked chest.

"Marriage."

"Marriage? We don't have the money to marry now. How can we marry?"

"I don't want anything from you; if you just marry me..."

He was silent.

After a long time, he said, "This is Shenzhen. Don't be too stubborn. We also shouldn't tie each other down.

You still have the right to make friends. If you go with someone else, I will not object."

Lingxiao did not react to this, but his coldness and detachment shocked her, and she even could not believe that what was happening before her eyes was real. Was she dreaming?

"He possessed me and for such a long time." With this thought, Lingxiao's tears gushed forth uncontrollably.

A girl friend in the same dormitory consoled her. "What are you crying about? You're silly. What age are you living in that you think a woman's virginity is so important?"

She received a letter from her older sister who was an adult and who spoke intelligently:

"Sister, if you feel you can't bear it, come home! Don't work any more. We can farm the land together and share suffering together. Father and mother are both here... A person has to fall into a pit to gain some wit. A popular saying says that a melon that must be twisted from the vine is never sweet. He does not love you at all, and he has no intention of marrying you. He just wants to fool around with you. You must also not take it too seriously or let it hurt you too much. He'll be made a fool of, too. Leave him at once. Don't be obsessed; otherwise, you may ruin yourself..."

Other people can talk so lightly and easily, but this could not free her from her sadness. She was already 27 years old, so even if she went back home, the young men with whom she grew up would be married and have families. To whom could she entrust her future? She felt like a lonely person thrown into the sea on a pitch-dark night. How she wished she could catch hold of a life-saving oar...

Conventional morality engenders the following feelings and understandings: Marriage is a woman's most glorious and only "enterprise." Only by marrying can a woman maintain social dignity and be recognized as a "woman" by society.

"A woman gains sexual satisfaction and social satisfaction from being a lover and a mother. This is the view of her 'future' of those around her, and it is also her own view of herself." Such ideas create countless tragedies for women.

One night following the lunar new year in 1988, a taxi driver named Shenghua from a certain hotel was driving his taxi on his way back home to Liantang. Upon leaving the gateway, he suddenly spied a dark figure standing before the gate. Alarmed, he called out, "Who is it?"

"Me," came the mournful reply.

Shenghua saw that it was Lingxiao, the woman to whom he had made the "solemn pledge of love." She was leaning against the wall wearing a sad expression.

"You didn't expect to see me, did you? I came by myself. There was no use bothering to have you come get me."

"You. Why do you say such a thing?" He was a little tense.

"Don't be afraid; I am not depending on you. Today, I want you to do something for me. Just one thing. When it's finished, we'll just forget everything afterward."

"Drive your car out. I want to take another ride in your car. I want to go all around Shenzhen to see Shenzhen by night once again..."

The automobile sped along the broad asphalt road. Except for the slight occasional whooshing sound from tires, the world seemed "dead."

Below the International Trade Building lay Shenzhen's "Old Street" where she and he had danced in the dance hall. He had held his cheek against her forehead so tenderly... The neon lights of the Zhongtai Hotel were still fascinating, bright and flashing. Faint pulses of lively music issued from the dance hall. Shenzhen, intoxicating Shenzhen, was out of the ordinary. Even though tragic, it was wreathed in fascinating colors.

In the darkness, Lin Lingxiao savored this final time of her life. Her head of beautiful black hair fell forward quietly...

"Are you all right, Lingxiao..., " he asked in a low voice as he slowed the car.

There was no answer from the rear.

He seemed to sense something was wrong and braked the car suddenly. He switched on the overhead light. Lin Lingxiao was slumped on the back seat, and an emptied bottle of dichlorvos rolled from her black handbag. Her pale and colorless face was frozen in a difficult to fathom smile...

Her black handbag contained her "final letter" to him. This was the old fine and traditional virtuous sentiments left by a "country person" who had lived in the modern metropolis of Shenzhen.

"Since I gave myself to you, I was your family in life, and I am your family's ghost in death."

"A man is always a sacred object of love, but a woman is just a toy..."

This was cruel. To destroy self for self, to realize another self through "self" destruction.

Chinese women are eternally denied.

Chapter V

"Black" Soul

Does the soul have color? Such a question may be offensive because there are two schools of thought on the

question, about which there is endless controversy, of whether a soul exists outside man's physical body.

Nevertheless, among the temporary workers of Shenzhen there are those whom the people say have "black souls." Black symbolizes evil, peril, the absurd, and the ugly. This is a reprehensible color. When a person's fate is suddenly enveloped by such things, he or she is spurned and disgraced.

Although one does not often see among the temporary workers of Shenzhen various old phenomena that are dying out, they actually do exist. They are real and should not be covered up.

It is the social reasons giving rise to such phenomena that should be studied and explored.

"Shadow Women"

Shenzhen Public Security Bureau personnel told me that prostitutes are also called "human shadows."

This has a rich connotation. A "human shadow" results from the refraction of light rays, and should properly be a part of a person. However, one cannot say that a shadow is a person possessed of intelligence and moral character, because, after all, it is just a reflection of light rays. It is a "human shape."

That there are prostitutes in Shenzhen is an undeniable fact. However, the question of whether these prostitutes count as "people" or count as flawed people, or as human "shadows" may be left to the sociologists to argue about. What concerns people is why, as women, they chose such a road.

Although Shenzhen's prostitutes are semi-open, it is still very difficult to interview them, not to mention that the public security authorities put out a dragnet for them several times, which caused them to become very vigilant. Even should you really run into them, they may be able to use their sensitivities and rich experience to figure out very quickly just what your intentions are, and then decide whether to take action or to keep their distance from you.

As a reporter, I did not want to give up an actual direct experience and simply rely on hearsay to imagine and write an article, but prostitutes seem to value firsthand judgments even more than writers.

I persisted in trying to interview them. Finally, I had no choice but to put myself in the hands of two friends in the Shenzhen Municipal Justice Department who acted as my "bodyguards."

It was already 2200 when we started the automobile to drive to "Old Street" in Shenzhen. At the last moment, I suddenly felt a little uneasy. To tell the truth, in my eight-year career as a journalist, although I had been in all sorts of circumstances and been through "100 wars," all I knew about prostitutes was what I had read in novels or what I had heard other people say about them. I had

never personally seen one. Just what were these women, who are called the "yellow pestilence," like?

The car came to a halt at a turn into the entrance of a road. "They'll find out who we are from the license plates if we stop in front of the entrance. We'll have to go on foot." The driver was very cautious.

With these two men as "bodyguards," I felt somewhat at ease. What's more I had a Shenzhen Public Security Bureau leader's "pass" on my person that could help me avoid suspicion and that could provide me protection at any time.

"Relax a little." They sensed my tense feelings. They joked with me, "If you're like this, people will be able to see that something is up before we get to the building, and you'll never get an interview!"

I calmed myself.

This was Shenzhen before development. Today people call this "Old Street." Not far away stands the International Trade Building. By comparison with that 50-story-high modern structure, this street is obviously shabby. Squat houses and shops line both sides of the street, their doors looking somewhat crude and lacking a modern air. Nevertheless, every shop has a neon light out front in vulgar grandeur.

This street has quite a few coffee shops. I went along with them into the "Gubao Coffee Shop." This was an extremely showy place. The front gave the feeling that there was only a single door and a single entrance with no other entrances or exits. The stairway was also rather narrow. At the top of the stairs to the right, the real coffee shop came into view. Here there was a large open room of about 30-some square meters where one booth after another was laid out in an orderly fashion. The booths, each of which held four people, were separated from each other into individual "spaces" by a two-meter-high decorator board. These "spaces" could be entered and exited only sideways via an entryway.

Visibility here was minimal. The two recessed spotlights in the decorated ceiling seemed to serve no function, shedding only desultory spots of weak light. By this weak light, I took a look inside a "space" from which the charming low sound of women's voices was issuing. A girl wearing a short white skirt and with shoulder length hair was lying in the arms of a man whose back was facing us...

We found a seat by a window and sat down. My escorts told me that this was supposed to be a coffee shop, but it was actually a place where brothel visitors met prostitutes. The shop owner was happy to have the girls talk "business" here, because she was able to make a "wind-fall profit" by selling more drinks and food. My escorts used to come here as part of their jobs. That was the period of greatest prosperity for the Gubao Coffee Shop. At 2100 or 2200, finding a seat was simply impossible, but now the place was mostly deserted. He explained

that one reason was that the public security authorities had taken major action in recent days to straighten out these cover-up coffee shops, dance halls, and small wine shops. They imposed some new requirements and changes about the intensity of lighting and overcrowding. They also made some arrests. In addition, the spread of AIDS made promiscuous people restrain themselves inasmuch as life was, after all, more important than sex.

We ate and had only a little bit to drink. (Later on when the bill came, it was more than 70 yuan. My God! What a fleecing!) A girl wearing a blue skirt and white blouse said somewhat plaintively, "Is this little bit all you want!"

"We'll have a little more after while," The driver, who was from Guangdong told her in the Guangdong vernacular.

No sooner had the girl who served us left, than two suddenly appeared out of thin air from heaven knows where. "Mister, do you want us to keep you company?"

Without waiting for us to reply, they squeezed into the "cubicle" sideways and sat down right up next to us. They very naturally took a "555" brand cigarette from a cigarette box on the table, lit it, and deftly exhaled a smoke ring.

"This is our boss," the driver said to the two girls. "We are just out with the boss to visit together and talk."

They immediately directed their attention toward me.

I notice that the two very much resembled each other, so I asked, "Are you sisters?"

"The boss has a sharp eye. We look alike; she is my older sister." The girl wearing the black skirt who looked a little older pressed close to me and said straight out, "Do you like me, mister?"

The smell of rouge, the smell of perfume, the smell of hair cream—a whole lot of fragrances mixed together penetrated my nostrils. She was laughing in a forced and unnatural way.

"Don't be in a hurry. Let's talk first." My escort helped me out of the embarrassing situation right away.

These two girls were from Anhui where they lived in a county seat. It was hard to tell whether they were sisters or cousins. Whatever the case, the younger one called the older one Axue, and the larger one called the smaller one Axia. They said that at first they were hired to work as temporary workers in an electronics parts plant in Shenzhen. Later on, when they earned too little money, the work was too tiring, and life was too hard, they really could not bear it. So they quit their jobs to become hostesses in a restaurant.

The one named Axue told me she had a stepfather who treated her badly and whom she did not care about, so

they left four years ago. She had not been back home once since then, and had only mailed money to her mother once to show that she was still alive.

"How much money did you mail?" I asked seemingly casually.

She said nothing, remaining silent.

"What's the secret?" my escort kidded her.

"As much as they could earn in several years, anyhow," she said.

We drank and talked. Axue seemed to feel that we were straying too far from the subject and appeared a little anxious. So she edged close to me and said in a low voice, "Are you worried, mister? We all have cards. Do you want to see them?"

I knew that "card" meant a slip from a medical laboratory.

She stared at me as though she would pull it out and show it at the slightest indication from me.

"Why do you want to do this kind of work?" I also asked her softly.

She gaped at me as though not knowing how to answer.

"Why? For no reason. To get some food to eat."

They discovered I was not that kind of man and that I might be a dangerous person, so they rose to go. But the driver blocked the exit from the "space."

"We're good people; don't make a mistake." Axue was a little flustered. "Over there, that's the girl who is doing this kind of thing."

In the opposite "space," a big and tall man was with a young girl wearing a white dress, and he was leading her downstairs...

The women left.

We looked at each other.

"What about it? Did you get what you came for?" my escort asked.

I said nothing. Get what I came for? I don't know whether I did or not. I only felt disgusted, depressed, and heavy...

I heard that the Public Security Bureau arrested some prostitutes and fined them heavily, most of them having to pay several thousand yuan to buy back their freedom.

During the 1989 campaign against brothels and prostitutes in Shenzhen, more than 1,000 people were netted in several nights. Not a single prostitute was a registered Shenzhen resident. All were from elsewhere, and naturally that included "temporary workers." A resident of Shenzhen told me the following fact rather proudly...

Sexual promiscuity is, without doubt, an odious social phenomenon in any social system. Use of sociology theories to analyze this phenomenon yields the conclusion that prostitution is directly connected to a society's political system and economic development. Although it is related to poverty, more important, it is the result of the bifurcation between human moral concepts and the worship of money. The social environment provides external conditions for such a bifurcation.

A girl whom the workers called "Xili" dropped out of sight from an enterprise in Shenzhen. She was from Zhejiang Province and very pretty. When they finally found her, she was in a heavily guarded detention center in suburban Shenzhen. One evening she and a sexual customer from Hong Kong were "netted." The Hong Kong customer paid a fine and was released. She preferred to be locked up for several days.

When the reporter visited her, her attitude was very harsh and haughty. Her cynical attitude distorted her beauty, and she was a little hysterical.

"...What's there to say? I said everything that you wanted to hear." She certainly regarded the reporter as a public security officer without a uniform.

"Whom do I blame? I don't blame anybody. I just blame my bad luck, damn it!" she sneered, suddenly becoming agitated.

"All I wanted to do was earn a little money. Be truthful, aren't there people doing things like smuggling and selling approval documents at a profit?" There are so many general managers who specially chose pretty girls as secretaries; for what? There are so many companies who specially train pretty girls to sell their products and attract business; for what? Money is power; is there anything you can't do? I made a little money, and you interfered..."

Someone tried to shut her up and she suddenly began to cry aloud:

"You make a habit of picking on weak people like me to bully knowing you can punish these young women workers..."

"Why do they want to choose such a disreputable way of earning a living?" I am still pondering this question in an effort to find a solution.

Crime and Non-Crime

This is a positively thorny "case."

Actually, the case is not a complex one. The home of a general manager of a Shenzhen Company, who is reportedly a somewhat renowned "entrepreneur" and reformer, was robbed of HK\$100,000.

In terms of the amount of money, this could be regarded as a fairly big robbery case; and from a political standpoint, when an entrepreneur's home is robbed and a

reform contractor sustains losses, that naturally may cause political repercussions. Thus, the robbery case was complicated by political considerations.

The public security authorities immediately opened the case for investigation.

The case was very quickly cleared up. The thief was a female temporary worker, a weak woman.

The public security investigators were suspicious at once.

How could this young woman have pulled it off so slickly? The wallet containing the money was locked in a drawer, and the drawer was still locked, but the wallet had taken flight. The crime scene showed no traces of prying, forcing, or smashing, and not so much as a fingerprint had been left behind. Could she be a master thief?

The matter was clarified later on, but the clarification only complicated the case.

Although he was a young man, this general manager had never married. He had had several girl friends, but matters never worked out, and the thief was one of his "girl friends," a woman named Xu.

A woman of 23 from Hangzhou, she was a designer in a joint-venture silk business.

Suzhou and Hangzhou are renowned for beautiful women, and Miss Xu was one of them. She was outstandingly beautiful, elegant, and a standout among all creatures.

This general manager had "set his sights" on this girl at a fashion model show. He invited the girl to go dancing with him in a refined and courteous way, and he whispered appropriate and teasing words in her ear. So it was that he won the girl's good will at first contact.

The general manager had a house, which was a wonderful place for making love. Solemnly promising her that he would love her forever, the two began living together very quickly.

"Love" can be crazy, but marriage must be sensible. This was his point of view. Thus, one year later, he became tired of her and "got rid of" her.

Weeping, Xu implored him not to be so heartless and not to forget the promises he had made to her...

He showed no feeling at all, but treated her entirely like a "stranger."

Miss Xu was enraged, and the idea of getting revenge rose spontaneously in her.

Thus, Miss Xu telephoned him.

"I would like to talk to you. I want to have a final talk..."

She went back to his quarters, the place where she and he had been excited and happy so many times. She seemed especially soft and gentle, so she also seemed particularly lovable. He became aroused again, embraced and kissed her, and lightly and adeptly took off her dress and her underclothes, and lay her on the bed...

Afterward, he fell into a deep sleep.

Miss Xu got up and took the key out of his pocket, opened the desk drawer, and threw the wallet containing the HK\$100,000 out the window into a patch of weeds...

On the morning of the following day, she retrieved the wallet from the weeds, and hid the money in a locked dishware cabinet in the mess hall. She threw the wallet into the ocean...

"I wanted to retaliate against him..."

Although the case had been broken, people held two sharply differing views as to how to judge the nature of the case.

One view held that such an entrepreneur and reformer should be afforded protection, and that Xu should be tried in court and given a severe sentence.

The other view held that there were good grounds for this case, and, particularly since it was difficult to show that Xu intended to keep the money, she should not be tried.

Some people said, "The political effects should be considered, particularly the company he controlled and his relationships to the children of leading central government leaders."

Others retorted, "The law recognizes only citizens and facts, and should not take into account political factors. In the eyes of the law, a reformer and a temporary worker have the same equal status."

The significance of the controversy over the facts of the case far exceeded the significance of the case itself. Furthermore, no quick conclusion is likely to be reached on this controversy; consequently, the Xu woman is still waiting behind barred windows...

Bigamy With Outside Involvement

A reporter named Jiang Yuan [1203 3293] from SHENZHEN FAZHI BAO and I ran ourselves ragged looking for the "Tianjin sister." This was a clue that the manager of a certain large Shenzhen hotel provided us. A woman from Tianjin, a temporary worker, married a man from Hong Kong who was already married, and gave birth to a girl child. The Hong Kong man left, however, never to return, so the Tianjin woman, with a baby and without money, found it difficult to make ends meet and was in urgent need of help.

Finally we found the address 108 on the ground floor of a building in a residential area located in a thicket of tall buildings. A strange man answered our knock on the door. Asked about the whereabouts of the "Tianjin

sister," he did not know. He had just bought this house, and he did not know who the previous occupant was.

Where would we go to look for the "Tianjin sister"?

Marriages with outside involvement formerly seemed to be a completely strange concept. Outside involvement was frowned on as "complicity with the enemy," so no one would dare marry an outsider. This taboo was rapidly broken, however, with the opening of Shenzhen. The new nationwide trend of marriages across national boundaries had turned marriages between Shenzhen and Hong Kong into a "hot line." From 1980 to early 1988, 4,144 marriages involving outsiders were registered in the Shenzhen municipal marriage register.

Actually, there was a far larger number of marriages to outsiders. Furthermore, the marriages to outsiders also concealed yet another problem: bigamous marriages involving outsiders. In such marriages, many of the women were pretty temporary workers from elsewhere.

This was a concept that possibly only an old person who had experienced the vicissitudes of life could understand and accept, namely concubinage. As far as the new tide of youth were concerned, this was "the third party." Concubinage is an old crime, but "the third party" is a fashionable new idea.

A young married woman moved into a residential area of Cuizhu Yuan. She had already given birth to two children, and although she was 26 years old, she was still charming, poised, and of graceful bearing. The owner of the house was a man named Tsai [5591] from Hong Kong.

When cadres from the residence committee registered the household, they found that the line for the owner of the house had been left blank. The thought this strange. Why had the residence of the father of the children not been registered?

Embarrassed, the young woman, whose name was Shao [6730], hemmed and hawed for a long time before telling the truth. Her child's father was named Tsai, and he lived in Hong Kong. He and his wife did not get along well, but he could not divorce, possibly because of problems having to do with the division of the estate; "so we did not register..."

There were 36 newly built buildings in the small Cuizhu Yuan residential area, many of which Hong Kong businessmen had purchased. At the same time, some of them also "sought" a young, good-looking woman in the tradition of "providing a magnificent house for a beloved woman."

The Hong Kong person was satisfied and the "beloved woman" was also joyous. No matter the age difference and the possibility that the man might get a divorce, she did not have to worry about food, clothing, and a place to live. Everything was provided by the Hong Kong man, and all she had to do was look after the house and perform a woman's duty.

Just how many such house caretakers were there in Shenzhen? This is a puzzle.

With the appearance of bigamy involving people from outside China, cross-border marriage disputes between Shenzhen and Hong Kong became more and more frequent.

A Hong Kong businessman named Chen [7115] in the Luohu district of Shenzhen, who had come to China to invest, came to know a temporary female worker named Lai [6351] in a restaurant where he ate. Although Chen was nearly half 100, as soon as he lay eyes on the young and pretty Lai girl, he became delirious. The Lai girl also made eyes at him. After several rounds in the enveloping clouds and the swirling mists of sexual delight, she became deeply attached to Chen. Not long afterward, Lai became pregnant.

Chen's wife found out about this affair and made a special trip to Shenzhen to find the Lai girl, from whom she demanded the return of her husband. She said, "If you will stop seeing my husband, I'll give you a large sum of Hong Kong money." But Miss Lai longed for more than the Hong Kong money; therefore, despite the lure of gain and the risk of a quarrel, she stated one condition: "I am in love with him, so nothing else matters. You can say I am a concubine or a third party and I'll admit it. That's the way it is..." She had a greater desire.

The Hong Kong firm transferred her to a registered enterprise in which he had invested and bought a house in the Cuizhu Yuan residential district. Not long afterward, Lai gave birth to a boy. On the child's birth certificate, the following is written: "Father: Ch'en So-and-so. Mother: Lai So-and-so..."

Another Hong Kong boss who came to Shenzhen to operate a factory at Shahe in the Nantou district quickly became "chummy" with a female temporary worker in the factory. He bought a house where they spent their "honeymoon," and he did not return to Hong Kong for several months.

His wife thought there was something fishy, so she sent a detective to conduct a secret investigation with the expected results. This wife was something of a military strategist who laid a plan to get her husband "transferred" back to Hong Kong. Once he reached Hong Kong, she put him under house arrest. She guarded him day and night, not permitting him to set one foot outside the house. No matter what, he could not return to Shenzhen.

The two did not quarrel a great deal, but there was no one at the Shenzhen factory to implement the contract, and the hundred or so workers who had been hired had no work to do. The factory could not continue operating; the machinery that had been shipped from Hong Kong had to be shipped back; and both parties sustained huge losses.

Bigamy with foreign involvement is an outgrowth of the economic situation that stares people in the face as a social phenomenon in Shenzhen.

Final Chapter

Let Me Change

On the night before I left Shenzhen, I had a lot of trouble sleeping, so I took a stroll along the tree-shaded boulevard in south Shenzhen. The sweltering heat of the day had faded, and the night was cool.

Along the road, one rarely saw the outlines of others enjoying the coolness since it was already the dead of night. I had turned around and was about to go back when, suddenly, I heard a male voice singing, and gradually it was joined by the voices of many people, male and female, a mixture of high and low, and off-register, but the tenor of the songs was heavy...

I walked over to where I saw between 20 and 30 people lying and sitting deep in a grassy spot. Without being told who they were, I sensed that they were temporary workers from elsewhere because of the words of this song.

I have a feeling
That keeps pounding in my heart.
It's impossible to go on pretending;
Love has flown far away...
Rain that keeps beating on a window
Can make people grumble.
The sun shining on a face
Can also make people weary.
In order to be content,
What kind of weather is needed?
Oh,
Let me change
In a strange world.
Let me change....

I also sat down on the grass to hum along with them this unfamiliar song. The moon was clouded, and the light that it cast produced a pattern on the grass. I saw a glistening tear roll down the cheek of a young lad with a sharply chiseled face...

"Without these temporary workers, there would not be the Shenzhen of today. A monument should be erected to them."

I remembered the words of Zhang Hanming, the chairman of the municipal Federation of Trade Unions.

Who will erect this monument to them?

Possibly no one but history has the qualifications.

As individuals, they are unknown, but the aggregate form they take is magnificent. In the great tide of Shenzhen's opening to the outside world and reform, they are the coolies that tow the boat and the warriors that battle the current. Even though some of them may

be cowardly, wretched, self-seeking, crude, and even false, while transforming Shenzhen with their coarse hands, they are also transforming themselves. The Shenzhen that is open to the outside world is also a university in which 300,000 temporary workers are freshmen. Soon they will graduate and fan out to become 300,000 pieces of tinder.

In writing the history of Shenzhen's development, and the history of China's reform and opening to the outside world, one cannot neglect to write about them. Of course, their lives and experiences during these years

seem drab. Apart from suffering, sadness, and perplexity, they seem to have no accomplishments. However, it is because in the process of exploring avenues for China that they play roles as "the ones being experimented on," that those who come after them will become clear-headed and smart, and when our republic chooses a way ahead, it will be resolute, and duty-bound not to look back.

Let me change; let us change; let China change.

This sad decade will become the marker by which successors date the historical exploits of the pioneers.

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